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ABSTRACT

Loblolly is a project of the students at Gary High School, Gary, Texas. This volume is a collection of personal narratives told by combat veterans of World War II who were originally from East Texas. The book's introduction (by J. W. Howland) tells the readers about the men. The veterans' oral histories are recorded and profiled separately in the rest of the book. The veterans who appear in the book are: Bill Applegate, Turner Britton, John Searcy, Bob Beaty, Jack Bowen, Clarence Otterman, Lovis Phillips, George Berry West, Travis Williamson, Everett Woodard, Farris Ivie, Jack Harris, C. E. Marshall, and John Howland. Throughout the book, photographs of the men and of the artifacts and events of World War II are interspersed with the text. (BT)

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Loblolly Salutes—"Their Finest Hour." Combat Veterans of World War II.

Lincoln King, Editor
Cassie Downing, Editor
Fiona McGarity, Editor

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Loblolly Salutes-

"Their Finest Hour"

Combat Veterans of World War II

Edited by: Lincoln King, Cassie Downing & Fiona McGarity

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Loblolly Salutes "Their Finest Hour"

Combat Veterans of World War II

EDITED BY LINCOLN KING,
CASSIE DOWNING, AND FIONA
MCGARITY

LOBLOLLY PRESS

The Loblolly Project of Gary High School has been publishing it's magazine, *Loblolly*, for 28 years. During that time the magazine's staff and sponsors have received state and national recognition for their efforts. The *Loblolly* is dedicated to the collection and preservation of East Texas history, culture, and folklore.

Cover Photo: The late John Searcy of Beckville, Texas (1919-1999) Navy Fighter Pilot and Hero-winner of Navy Cross, Distinguished Flying Cross, 8 Air Medals, Purple Heart. Sank Japanese battleship "Ise" on July 24, 1945.

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THE LOBLOLLY PROJECT
BOX 189
GARY, TEXAS

TO THE VETERANS OF WORLD WAR
II
OF EAST TEXAS
AND TO THE SUMMERLEE
FOUNDATION
FOR THE GRANT
WHICH MADE THE BOOK A
REALITY

LOBLOLLY ADVISOR, LINCOLN KING
WITH EDITORS CASSIE DOWNING
AND FIONA MCGARITY

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INTRODUCTION

One of the great side benefits associated with my move to Carthage, Texas in 1979 was the warm reception by the people and the many friendships quickly and easily established. My Texas-born wife was thrilled to be back in her home state and I was more than content to leave the cold wind and snow of the Great Plains of Kansas and Colorado. When Lincoln King invited me to prepare this introduction, I accepted the challenge because I have a deep respect and appreciation for the work done on Loblolly by Lincoln and his students at Gary High School. It also provided me with an opportunity to say a few words about some friends and wartime comrades. George Berry West is a classic example. We both flew a tour of duty with the 8th Air Force. George was a pilot and I was a pathfinder navigator. It was always a pleasure to share stories and reminisce with him. Neither of us was very "military", and we both had reservations concerning the leadership qualities of some of our commanders. One afternoon George told the story of a raid he made on the Renault factory in Paris. George piloted the lead plane and the Acting Wing Commander (George's Group Commander) flew in his airplane. Strangely, he didn't fly in the co-pilot's seat. He flew in the tailgunner's position so he could spot all the other aircraft in the formation. After the bombs were dropped, George picked up a heading for England and started home. However, the Colonel called on the interphone and said, "George, make a 360 degree turn here so that I can look over that target area again." George replied, "Colonel, I am in command of this aircraft. We were sent out to bomb the factory. We did it. Now we are going home. I am not going to take this plane and fifty-three others in this formation on a sightseeing tour of France."

George took a little flak from the Colonel, but he had to respect George's decision. Indeed, this sensible response to a nonsensical order brought about increasing awareness of the fine leadership qualities of George Berry West.

The Army Air Corps attracted many men from Panola County and I found myself among friends and wartime colleagues in Carthage. Bill Applegate was a navigator in a rescue squadron in the South Pacific. I flew with the 8th Air Force out of England where we had many navigational aids such as GEE (the forerunner of LORAN), and a rather primitive form of airborne radar known as H2X. We also had short and long wave radio aids that made our navigation job relatively easy. My only experience navigating an aircraft across a large body of water was our flight from Gander, Newfoundland to Prestwick, Scotland in December

1943. Flight time was about ten hours. As we flew a phrase from the Ancient Mariner kept running through my mind.

"Water, water everywhere!"

I used a small-scale chart covering the entire distance from Newfoundland to Scotland on which I plotted my three star fixes. However, as we flew, the United Kingdom seemed to shrink in size. True, Prestwick, Scotland was the objective, but after two thousand miles of water I would have been content to land anywhere in Scotland, England or Ireland. We finally made landfall and hit Prestwick on the nose. But I must tip my hat to navigators like Bill Applegate who flew over many thousands of miles of ocean. Using celestial navigation and radio aids Bill Applegate always found his pin point haven of safety in a world seemingly made up of water.

John Searcy, born in Beckville, Texas was a Navy fighter pilot who served on the carriers USS Hornet and USS Bennington. Like Bill Applegate, he too flew over thousands of miles of open water. However, in addition to his navigation chores he also had to fly the aircraft. Even more demanding, he had to land, often on a pitching and rolling deck in the middle of nowhere.

Turner Britton of Dotson, Texas was a Navy crewman on board the aircraft carrier USS Essex. He served two years in combat in the Pacific and can tell you first hand about flight operations and aircraft carriers.

C. Ernest Marshall, a native of Carthage, piloted a B-24 bomber and flew 52 missions against the Japanese in the South Pacific and Philippines. I have spent many pleasant hours reminiscing with Ernest. Let me share with you a story he once told that demonstrates the leadership qualities required of the pilot and aircraft commander of a heavy bomber.

On arrival at his base in the South Pacific, Ernest was assigned a plane complete with the crew of a pilot rotated back to the USA. Ernest knew the Consolidated B-24 very well and read all technical manuals associated with flight operations. One of these manuals recommended cracking open the bomb bay doors on takeoff to prevent possible buildup of hazardous gasoline vapors. Accordingly, on his first takeoff he instructed the flight engineer to open the bomb bay doors just a few inches. When the flight engineer replied, "He had never done such a thing before." Ernest gave him a short lesson in command procedures and the doors were immediately opened. Further, the doors were opened in exactly the same manner on all subsequent takeoffs.

To some, the incident might seem trivial and insignificant. However, it was attention to detail and orders like these given by young people such as C. Ernest Marshall that saved lives. The planes he flew never blew up on takeoff. However, some did.

Travis Williamson from Tenaha, Texas was also a B-24 pilot. He flew in the European Theater of Operations out of Italy. The fighting was fierce in the European Theater. Travis was shot down twice. The second time he was captured by the Germans and spent the remainder of the war in an enemy concentration camp. None the less, he was lucky. More than 50,000 American airmen died in Europe during the course of the war.

Jack Bowen and I have a special relationship. We both flew with the 91st Bomb Group out of Bassingbourn, England with the Eighth Air Force. Jack was a ball turret gunner and I was a Navigator. February 21, 1944 was the second day of Big Week and a raid was scheduled to the Ruhr valley near Muenster and Gutersloh. Both of us flew that raid with the 1st Combat Wing of the 1st Bomb Division. In the target area, weather was cloudy. The Wing leader made a serious mistake and turned the entire formation into a cloudbank. The formation broke up. With our defensive firepower weakened, the German fighters pressed home their attack. Fighter attacks coupled with intense anti-aircraft fire were devastating. Thirty-eight B-17 bombers (380 men) were lost out of the 1st Bomb Division on that date. Eight out of twelve planes from Jack's squadron were shot down, and Jack's plane was among the lost. Luck was with me, and I survived.

Jack was captured and made a POW. Toward the end of the war he was forced to make a 1000-mile death march westward as the Russians advanced into Lithuania, East Prussia and Poland. For his guts, grit and determination I can only say; Jack my friend, I salute you.

Everett Woodard was also a gunner with the Eighth Air Force. The German fighter pilots often considered heavy bombers "easy meat" and ran up impressive scores of victories. However, when they ran up against sharpshooters like Everett Woodard, they often paid the price. Everett Woodard was awarded the Silver Star for shooting down two enemy fighters over Germany.

Another airman who flew as a gunner was Bob Beaty. He flew on the Boeing Superfortress, the B-29, with the first group to fly against Japan in the Far East. Although fighter attacks were not as severe as they were in Germany, the flying conditions were unbelievably bad. The first B-29 groups flew from bases in China. The runways were made by Chinese hand labor and all the gasoline and supplies had to be flown over the hump. Further, the engines on the early models of the B-29 were not completely reliable. An engine lost on takeoff almost always meant the heavily loaded aircraft was destined to crash. We are happy that Lady Luck stayed by Bob Beaty's side during this period.

One of the more pleasant episodes of my life was spent playing the keyboard with the Ukulele Strummers of the Carthage Central Baptist Church. It was here that I first met Lovis Phillips of Gary, Texas. I had a great time accompanying Lovis as he picked out dozens of tunes on his mandolin and banjo. After a jam session one evening we talked about wartime experiences. Lovis was an infantry sergeant who fought in the Battle of the Bulge and across Germany to meet up with the Russians. As we talked Lovis told me about finding a beautiful mandolin in a bombed-out shop somewhere in Germany. As he put it, "It was the finest instrument I had ever seen. I just had to sit down and pick those strings for awhile."

"Why didn't you take it with you?" I asked.

He replied, "I just didn't have room on my back for a mandolin, my rifle and the rest of my gear."

Farris Ivie was a fellow Rotarian in the Carthage Rotary Club. We sat together on many occasions, but the conversation never seemed to drift to wartime experiences. Farris was a Captain and commanded an infantry company with the US Army. He served an extended tour of combat in the South Pacific and Philippines. However, when the war was over, like many of the rest of us, he left the military behind and returned to enjoy life as a civilian in Carthage, Texas.

Jack Harris of Beckville, Texas was also in the infantry. About the only wartime experience we share is that we both were part of the attack on Normandy, D-Day, June 6, 1944. However, I flew comfortably above most of the action at an altitude of 14,000 feet while Jack was on the ground in the midst of one of the fiercest battles of the entire war. Jack survived the terrible carnage of D-Day and fought on into Germany with the elite "Night Raiders" group. He was wounded several times but always returned to combat. Although mild mannered, Jack Harris was a fearsome warrior. On one occasion he and a buddy were scouting an area when they observed a group of seven German officers reviewing a field chart in a copse of trees. Two soldiers stood guard on the right and left sides of the officers. Jack and his buddy were undetected so they decided to set up a crossfire to wipe out the well-armed Germans. Jack moved to the left and his buddy to the right. On schedule, Jack opened fire with his Thomson sub machine gun. But his buddy froze and never pulled his trigger. Firing rapidly and accurately, Jack did the job by himself. For this action he received French and American decorations for valor. Indeed, he received several decorations for valor and is probably the most highly decorated veteran from this area.

Following the war Jack left the army and the carnage he detested behind. He was ordained a minister of God and has a flock of loyal followers in his church in Beckville, Texas.

Perhaps the luckiest of all the veterans in this book is Clarence Otterman. He is one of the very few surviving crewmembers of the battleship USS Arizona that was attacked by the Japanese and blew up at Pearl Harbor. More than 1000 crewmembers died in that terrible explosion. However, Clarence survived and later had a military career with the US Army.

This brief summary cannot do justice to the contributions made by these men in the service of their country. But it does show the wide variety of job skills acquired by young men in their late teens and early twenties. When their country needed them, they went to work for the armed services. They learned thousands of different trades and skills. Dry land farmers became sailors and plowboys learned to fly airplanes. They became competent mechanics, electricians, radar and radio operators, navigators, tank drivers, sailors, parachutists and riflemen.

The schooling was fast and furious. However, at the end of approximately one year of training, a twenty-year-old pilot might be entrusted with a four-engine bomber weighing more than sixty thousand pounds. The four engines of the B-24 and the B-17 bombers delivered a total of almost 5,000 horsepower. We ask the reader to think back to the time you were twenty years old. At that tender age did you ever drive a machine with 5,000 horsepower or use celestial navigation to guide yourself and crew halfway around the world?

More than a half-century has passed since these men were young and performed the endless array of miracles that helped the Allies defeat the tyranny of the Axis powers. But the fact remains that these young men rose to meet the challenge. They did their job. They did it well. And some were still too young to vote.

J. W. Howland
Carthage, Texas
June 1999

BILL APPLEGATE

Bill Applegate was born in Gary where his father was the school superintendent, and his mother was the postmaster. After high school, and time as a student at Stephen F. Austin, he went on to earn a living. While employed in San Antonio, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and became a navigator flying the B-17. His role was to rescue others as a member of the Second Emergency Rescue Detachment. He performed these missions over a wide area of the Southwest Pacific.

After the war, Bill Applegate found his way back to Panola County. Over the next 50 years, he was proven to be a most valued and loved member of the community. His profession was with the First State Bank in Carthage as President. He was a true community leader in his role in civic organizations. He and his wife Dorothy are now retired, as earned after busy and fruitful lives.

The Gary Band, About 1914
front fow , L-R: Will Laird, Joe Heaton, Grear Griffith
back row, L-R: Albert Kickson, Bob Hill, Claibe Applegate, Jess Ray

I was born in Gary on September 7,1919, in a little house by the old Baptist church. It was still a church until a few years ago when somebody bought it and moved it away. Back in those days, you weren't born in a hospital; you were born at home. Dr. Whiteside from Timpson came and delivered me right in that house in Gary.

My father was superintendent of the school at Gary, and my mother was

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the postmaster. He was also the station agent at the same time. Later, he was the partner in the drug store with Doctor Z.L. Daniel there at Gary. I remember the early days in Gary well. My dad had the first Model-T with glass windows in it. Back in those days, they just had canvas curtains. It was a very tall vehicle and was a little top heavy. Some wouldn't ride in it because they were afraid it would turn over.

My father only had the use of one leg. People thought he'd had polio, but he didn't. He'd had an accident when he was crawling as a baby, and severed a nerve in his hip. They didn't have much medical science back in those days. They didn't even know he was injured until he was old enough to walk, and couldn't walk normally. He never let that bother him his whole life. He overcame that, and I never thought of him as being handicapped. His name was Claibe Applegate. He was also born in Gary. In fact, the old home place is still there. His father's name was Jim Applegate. He was at one time the deputy sheriff of Panola County. His mother's name was Colane Applegate. He had five sisters. They were all born here, and most of them lived and died in Gary. His mother was from Timpson. They originally came from Tennessee. I think we're deeply rooted in Gary. That's where I was born.

AT GARY SCHOOL

Now we did leave there. My father was teaching school at the time before he got into the newspaper business full time. We moved around East Texas to different locations. Gary was always kind of home. We never got that far from Gary. I finished high school in Center, Texas in 1935, and went on to Stephen F. Austin State University for a little while. Then I didn't come back to Panola County until after World War II.

I was a little late getting into the military. Back in those days, if you were employed in a job critical to the war effort, you weren't taken into the service. I was repairing Norden bomb-sights in San Antonio in a very critical job. I was classified where I would not have to go into the service. My brother was 17 years old. He got permission from my parents to volunteer. I was five years older. Those civilian clothes were getting kind of tight. I was in a military area in San Antonio as well.

My brother had an eye problem. He volunteered to enlist at 17 and couldn't wait to get overseas (off limited service). He went to the Pacific. I knew he was in the Pacific, but I didn't know where he was. I got word somehow that he was in Hilo, Hawaii. We had picked up a rescue boat in Honolulu, and we had about a week there. So I went down to Hilo, and called in for landing instructions, and he was on duty there in the control tower. That was a surprise. I later had a much more unexpected reunion in Manila with him when we just met each other.

J.R. AND BILL APPLEGATE AT HILO, HAWAII

I had three young friends from Alto, Texas. I had known their brothers in college. They came to San Antonio to try to get work. They didn't get deferred so they wanted to join the Air Corps. They didn't even know where to find the place to take the exam. I took them down one Saturday morning to take the exam to show them where to take it.

The sergeant said to me, "You're here, you might as well take the exam too." I replied, "I'm not here for that." He then said, "Well, you're going to have to wait for them." So I finally agreed to take the test. Well, to make a long story short, I made a 98. All three of the other kids failed. The sergeant said, "You made an excellent score. You need to take a physical exam just to see if you can get in." I replied, "No, I'm not." He said, "Well, you need to know whether you're in good shape or not. So go on and take the exam." So I went the next day and took the exam, and of course I passed it.

BILL APPLEGATE-

The next thing you know, I volunteered. I was a little late getting in, as it was 1944 by then. I spent 24 months in the service. I spent about half of it training in the United States, and the other half in the Pacific. I had about 1,400-1,500 hours flying in the Pacific. Mostly it was flying B-17's, but I also flew the C-47 transport a lot. I was assigned to the Second Emergency Rescue Squadron. This was a small outfit attached to the 13th Air Force. We were always kind of attached to somebody and we had to kind of look out for ourselves. We had to do a lot of midnight requisitioning for supplies and that sort of thing. We enjoyed being together because it was a small unit.

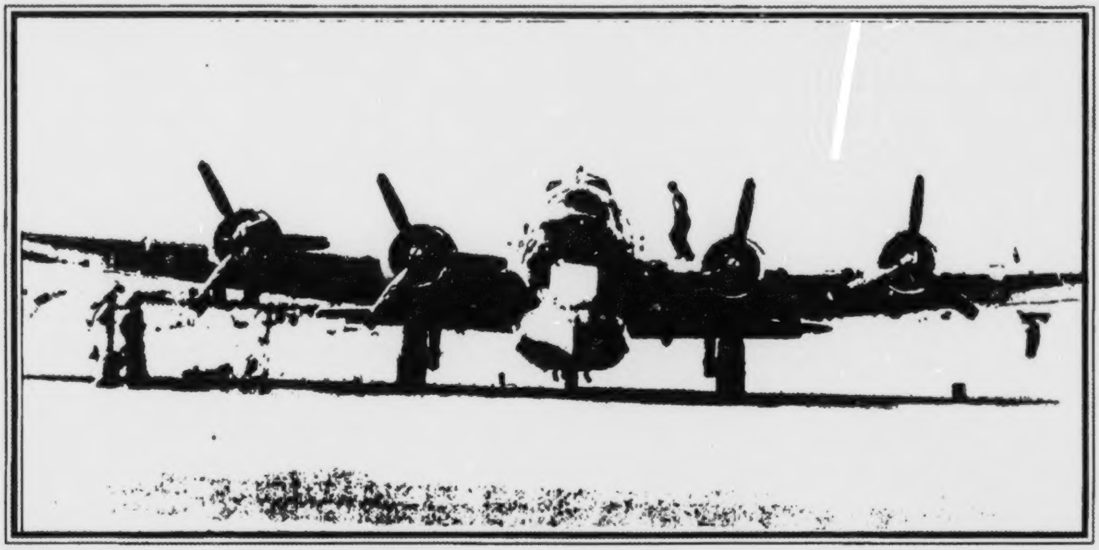
We basically flew a B-17 with a boat attached to the bottom of it. This was very unusual. Of course, it always created a big commotion when you landed on an air strip because nobody had seen anything like that over there. What we did with these B-17's, we would fly cover on our raids made by our planes over islands in the Pacific. Our experience was mainly in the South China Sea area and raids on places like Borneo and Halmahara and such islands.

My first station was New Guinea. We had to island hop to carry the boat going from Hawaii, to Christmas and Canton Island, Tarawra, and wound up in New Guinea. Our base was back just north of New Guinea itself. Then I was stationed at Morotai, an island about the size of Panola County. Morotai was representative of how the Army or Marines would take control of an island from the Japanese. In many cases they would take the perimeter and build an air strip and protect that part of the island. That's what we did part of the time. We knew there were Japanese on the other parts of the island, and we knew they were pretty well cut off by our Navy. They didn't have any supplies, so they couldn't do a lot of damage to us. We knew they were in unknown numbers, but we didn't worry much about them. Occasionally one would slip in one of our chow lines because they were starving to death. When the war was over it was discovered there were 15,000 Japanese still there. They existed by fishing and raising vegetables. We had no idea there were that many left.

We were still there in the summer of 1945. We were supposed to fly north to cover the invasion of Japan. Then the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, followed by one on Nagasaki, and the war was over with Japan's surrender. So instead of being involved with the invasion, we were transferred to Clark Field, north of Manila in the Philippines. That's where I was stationed after the war.

My record was a little misleading. It sounds like I was a war hero. I had the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal with six battle stars and a Presidential Unit Citation. The matter of fact is that we all got a star for flying over the area. I believe the guys down on the ground fighting were the ones who deserved the battle stars. The recognition I received was not earned like those men down there on the ground. I also earned the American Theater Campaign Medal, the Victory Medal, and the Philippine Liberation Medal.

Like I said, I was a little late getting in. They had them pretty well whipped when I got there. So my war was a comparatively safe one. We fought the weather more than anything else. We lost several planes to the weather over the South China Sea. It was pretty rough. There were 40,000-50,000 foot cloud buildups. Sometimes you would fly into those, and you wouldn't come out. We did a lot of things, but our primary mission was to rescue Air Corps people who were knocked down during combat or got lost and had to ditch in the ocean. It was our job to try to rescue them. We had two different types of rescue aircraft. There was the amphibian, which was the more commonly known PBY Flying Boat. We had the B-17's with the boat on the bottom of it that we could drop to someone who had ditched. It was a 16 foot life boat, fully equipped. We dropped it with two big parachutes from a height of about 1,500 feet. What we would do if we found the subject, or if we were covering an air raid, we'd lay off the target to see if they were going to get successfully through the raid and back home again.



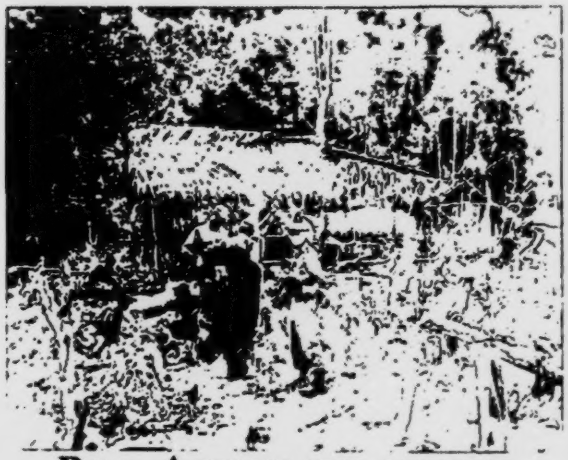
If they had to ditch, we went into action. The PBY could land on the water. That would probably be the best way. If we could land, we could pick them up and bring them back to the base. If they couldn't land, or it was to rough, we would drop the boat. The big problem was the PBY could land in rough water, then we would have big problems taking off. Then there was a certain wind velocity when they couldn't land.

When they couldn't land, we'd drop the boat. The rescued fliers would chop off the parachutes and get started. There was about a 1,500 mile cruising range for these boats. They could usually find their way back to safety. Our outfit rescued 648 people. We also did searches and found some people. In the cases I was involved in, we were able to land and pick them up. The boat was a last ditch alternative if you couldn't do anything else. It was sure handy when it had to be used. So very seldom did we have to use the boats.

I remember the Dutch Crew of a plane that had to go down in the water. They had a reputation for being thrifty like the Scots. Parachute silk went at a pretty good price over there. We dropped a boat to them, and they began to try to pull in 2000 pounds of parachute to try to save the material. There was a hatchet to chop the parachute off. They were going to try to save them. It just didn't work, and they had to let the parachutes go to save themselves.

Our unit received a Presidential Unit Citation for rescuing the 648 people. I think it was because of the nature of the beast. It wasn't how many, it was the fact that we were involved in trying to save people's lives. It was recognized that way. I had pretty routine missions. Most of the time I was involved with our squadron missions or assignments. I did two assignments which were unusual which I can talk about.

We had a directive from the Air Force to find an airplane that had crashed during the war. This was after the war was over. The plane had crashed into Mount Apo, the tallest mountain in the Philippines. That's north of Davao in a southern province. The plane was a B-25, a twin-engine bomber. The only survivor was the tail gunner. He had been able to walk out, but left some question as to whether there were others had lived as well.



BILL APPLEGATE ON THE RIGHT, DURING SEARCH FOR LOST PLANE

The pilot's father was a judge on the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, who was a personal friend of General Vandergrift, the Marine Corps Commandant. We got instructions to find that plane and determine the fate of the crew. We took off for Davao, which is near Zamboanga. And incidently, monkeys do have tails in Zamboanga. We spent about a month there using a helicopter looking for the wreck. We had to work with the Moros who were a primitive tribe living in the area. We had to take beads and stuff to them to trade, just to get them to lead us to the wreck.

My particular job, along with the helicopter pilot's, was to get supplies to them so they wouldn't have to lug them up the mountain. Eventually, we found the plane and the remains of the bodies. We wound up taking the jawbone of the pilot to Tokyo for identification. That way I got to visit Tokyo, which was a real treat even if it was on a sad mission. I got to see Tokyo, the way it was after the war. We also got to fly over Mount Fuji, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. It was a very interesting two week trip. That was something that I enjoyed, but it was a little unusual.

The last assignment I did was also out of the ordinary. The American logistics people worked out a deal with the Philippine government. They were going to grant the Philippines their independence and did so on July 4, 1946. They had to make some negotiations about the rights of the United States, and particularly regarding air strips and military installations. So they worked out a deal to trade all the air strips, temporary and otherwise, to the Philippine government for the right to Clark Field. That was a very large military field very similar to Barksdale. It was about 60 miles north of Manila.

Well, to do that, they had to have some idea about the condition, location, and the soil of the air strips. So I flew for 30 straight days. There were two pilots, me as the navigator, and a photographer. We flew on a PBY. We found all of the strips, and there were over 200 of them. We'd find a strip, fly over it at about 1,500 feet, and photograph it. Then we flew down and looked at it. If it looked like it would take a plane landing, we'd land on it and shoot some photos on the ground. It was unusual to fly so often. In training we'd fly two or three missions a week. Overseas we were allowed to fly a mission possibly once a week. On this tour we flew for 30 days in a row. We were proud of ourselves for that, and we received a commendation for doing that.

My last mission was on July 4, 1946. That was for the observance of the granting of independence to the Philippines. There was a big ceremony on the ground. General MacArthur was there. They were having a big fly-over with all the planes they could muster for the occasion. General MacArthur was a legend with his, "I shall return" promise about retaking the Philippines. And he did return. You know he was a great showman. He had a monument erected on the beach at the island of Leyte where he stepped on the beach when he came back. He had five stars put in the ground depicting his generalship. Then somebody stole the stars from the monument.

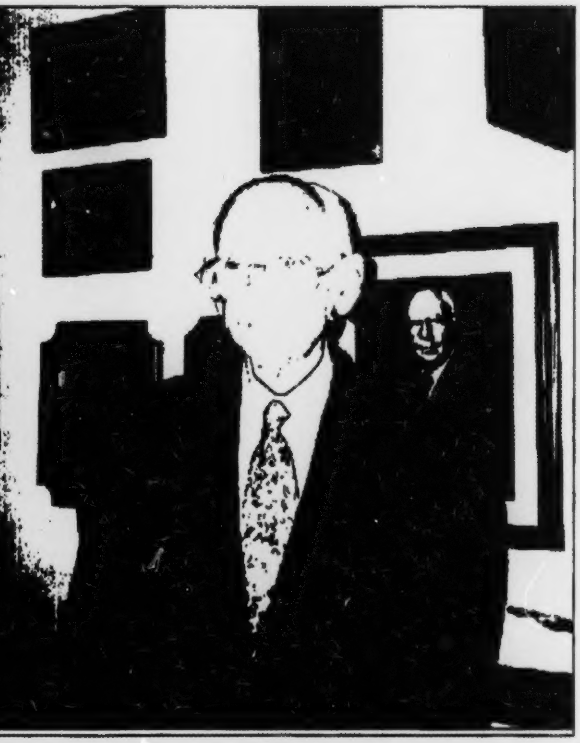
Immediately after the July 4, 1946 observance, I came home. We were accorded the privilege of coming home by signing up to fly some B-29's home, or coming back by boat. I signed up to fly home. Then I heard that about half of them had to ditch between the Philippines and Guam. So I backed out and came home by boat. I planned to enroll at the University of Texas Law School. I stopped by Austin after being discharged in San Antonio. The school was so crowded, they wouldn't let you enroll unless you had a place to stay. The only place I could find to stay was a gymnasium that had been converted into a dormitory. I'd had about three years of that, and didn't want anymore so I came on home.

My father wanted me to go to work down in Hamilton selling advertising. You know newspaper advertising is kind of an abstract project. It's like buying something over the counter. I didn't really feel like I wanted to get into that, but I didn't want to hurt his feelings, so I said, "I'm going to East Texas to visit the relatives for a few weeks and then I'll be back." I came to Carthage, and my uncle J.R. Brannon was on the board at First State Bank. They had someone resign. In fact it was Warren McPherson's father. They needed someone to fill in. So they asked me to work until they could get someone. That was November, 1946. They never did get anyone. I'm still employed at First State Bank and Trust Company 53 years later. Well, anyway that's how I got into the banking business. I've enjoyed every bit of it. It's been a wonderful association through the years. I worked my way up to President before I retired. I'm still on the Board.

I met Dorothy on October 31, 1946 in Center, Texas. She was visiting some of her relatives. She is a native of Los Angeles, and was born not too far from the corner of Hollywood and Vine. There was a Halloween Party, and I was invited to go with Dorothy, so that's when we met. And I talked her into staying around for awhile. She went to work over at Barksdale. She had been in the service too as a Navy Wave.

Her father had a heart attack, so she had to go back to Los Angeles. She didn't come back until 1948. She came back then, and this time I didn't let her go home. We took her return ticket, cashed it in, and went on our honeymoon. So fortunately, I was able to talk her into staying. We celebrated our 50th anniversary last year. It's been a very happy marriage for over 50 years. We had two children. We lost our daughter. Our son lives in New York, and has been there 18 years. He's doing composing and does a lot of sound engineering work. He travels a lot in his work. His wife has a successful career of her own. We are most proud of both of them.

BILL APPLEGATE AT AGE 6



BILL APPLEGATE, CIVIC LEADER

KATHY WHITE, DOROTHY AND BILL APPLEGATE, MARY ROBINSON

TURNER BRITTON

Mr. Turner Britton is a well-known citizen of Panola County. Those who know him, love him. In his younger days, he served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and saw a lot of action in the Pacific against the Japanese.

He found a career in water well drilling. He began his own business and worked for many years. After retiring from his business, he can still be found all around the county helping friends out when in trouble with their water wells.

If you have a hard time finding him, chances are he is traveling to a Linda Davis concert. He has played a major roll in helping Linda get started in her career as a country music singer. When you see Mr. Turner he will always be wearing a big smile and a Linda Davis cap.

Q. When and where were you born?

A. I was born in Dotson, Texas, a little community over in western Panola County on January 23, 1923.

TURNER BRITTON

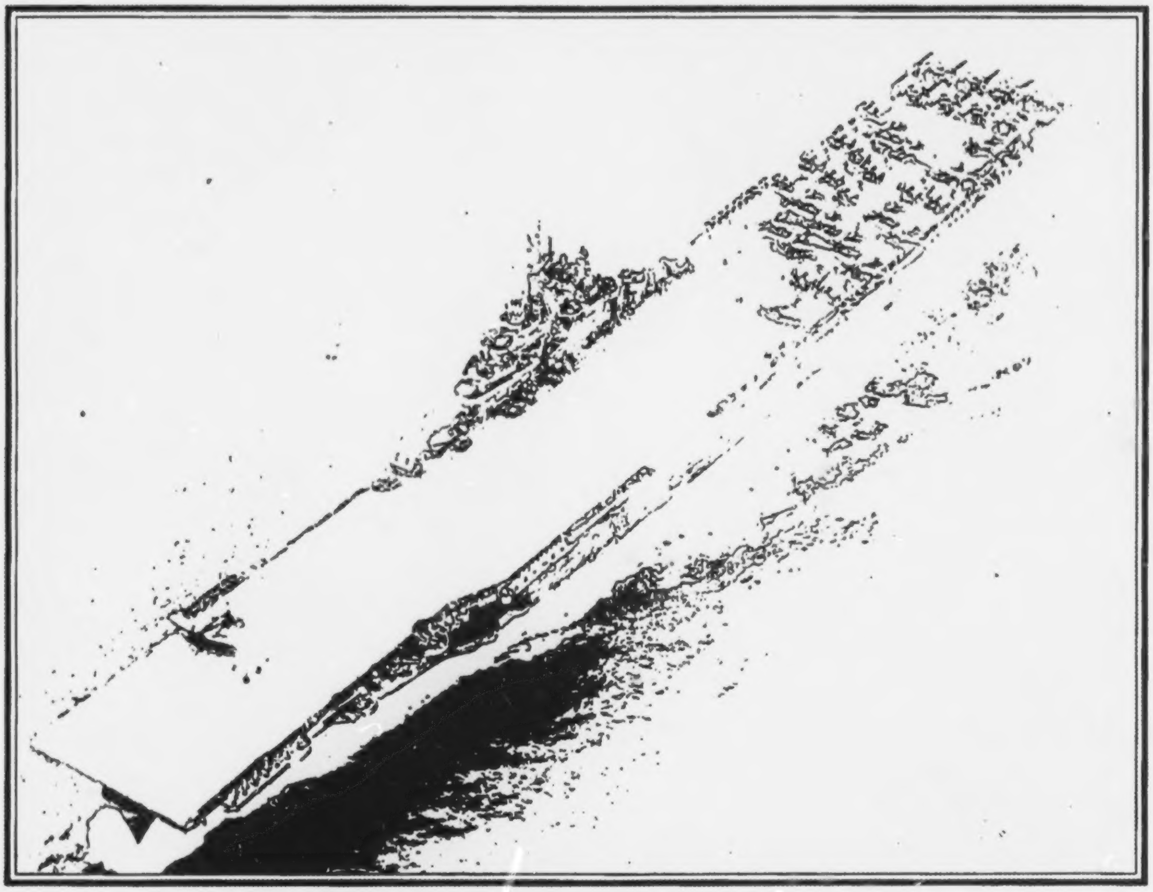
Q. Tell us about your family and schooling.

A. Well, I went to school at a rural school there close to Dotson. It's been closed for years. I think it was called Byfield. I went there until about the 8th grade. At that time there was only eleven grades in school. After the 11th grade you were through with high school. I went one year to Timpson. They ran a bus up there. Then I went back and finished at Carthage. I graduated in 1941. After I finished school, back in those days, things were pretty hard. I went to a CCC Camp which was sponsored by the government. It didn't pay very much, but it was a good place for boys. It was kind of like the service except they didn't fight or anything.

They just did repair work on roads and stuff like that. I did that for about ten months before I went into the Navy in 1943.

Q. What was Navy training like?

A. Well, I left Carthage, Texas, on March 10,1943, with four other guys: Jack Scott, Jim Hunt, Hubert Shires, and J.C. Langley. We went to San Diego and did basic training at the U.S. Naval Training Station. We were all in the same company when we went to boot camp for six weeks, but then we split up for the rest of the war. I finished boot camp and was transferred out to where I went aboard ship. I was assigned to the *U.S.S. Essex*, an aircraft carrier, and in September, 1943, we made the trip to Pearl Harbor in about four days. We were there a short time, part of it in training. We did exercises like firing on targets. A plane would pull a target behind it, and the ships would fire on it.



THE USS ESSEX

Shortly after we got back to Pearl Harbor, we made our first mission. We hit Guam Island, which is in the Marianas. At that time it was occupied by the Japanese. They had captured Guam from us back in the early part of the war. The Americans never did take it back during the war. We would just go bomb it once in awhile. That was the main purpose of a ship like the *Essex*, to move planes to where they could attack the Japanese. We had guns on the *Essex*; five inch guns, and they had forty and twenty millimeter ones. The object of these guns was for protection, not to attack people with. We had roughly about 100 planes aboard. We had a fighter squadron, a bomber squadron, and a torpedo squadron.

The *Essex* was the first of her class. It was what they called a fast, super aircraft carrier. They could move really fast in water. She was followed by about 18 more of her class before the war was over. That meant that more ships were built just like her. They would say it was an *Essex* class, but it would be the *Horne*t or something else.

Then we started what you call "island hopping." We went from island to island. We would come into Pearl Harbor and get orders to take off and bomb another island or hit some Japanese shipping or planes. We tried to do everything by a surprise mission. That made it easier. We would try to get their planes on the ground., Later, they began to land troops on some islands and take over, but they would skip a lot of them. If you skip one, and get the next one you can cut off their supplies, and get that island under control yourself without a fight.

Q. Do you have some stories from combat that you would like to share with us?

A. We had a lot of stories. The big majority of them had something to do with our planes, like out on a mission or something. One I remember was about Lieutenant Twelves, and a rescue mission he was on. He was a member of Air Group 15. During the war the *Essex* had four different air groups. Air groups were people who were in combat just about constantly. They didn't stay over there near as long as we did, the actual crew of the ship. We went out with Air Group 9, They stayed awhile, and then we changed. Air Group 15 replaced them. Then we had Air Group 83.

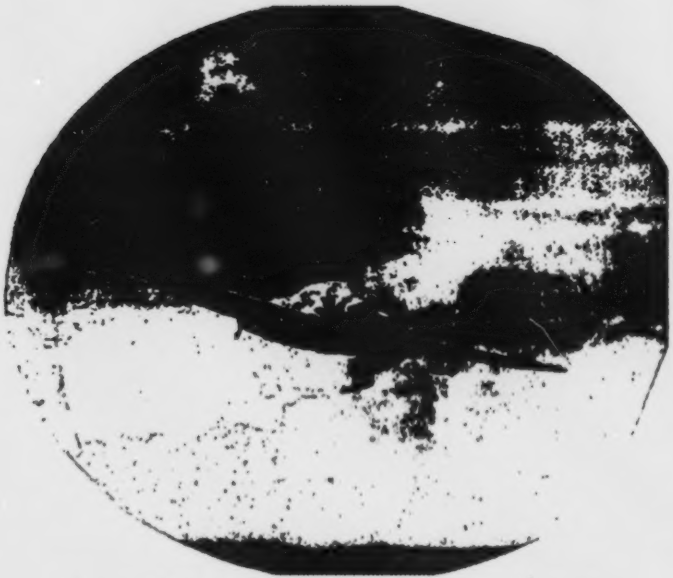
Lieutenant Twelves was a new fighter pilot. He was sent out over an island with his commander, and they heard a seaplane captain calling. A pilot had been shot down near the island. So they were sent out to pick him up. They were calling for help as the Japanese had been shooting at the seaplanes while they were trying to rescue the downed fliers. Lieutenant Twelves went to run the Japanese planes off. He not only ran them off, but he shot down two of them. Another pilot shot down a third Japanese plane. The seaplane had been damaged so badly that a submarine which was really close by picked up all the pilots and crewmen. We had stories like this often on something dramatic happening.

One story I remember. I haven't touched on this lately. I do remember one of our pilots got hit by enemy gunfire and was blinded. Two of them were instructing him back to the ship, and they got him all the way back to the ship. He hated to come back like this, but they just kept talking to him. He finally made a couple of passes by the ship preparing to land. They were trying to talk him down. Then he took off on his own, and just went the other way. He probably just kept going until he ran out of gas and just crashed into the sea somewhere. He just didn't want to come home We often had cases of pilots where their buddies would land in the water hurt. They'd land beside them and help them out of there. There was lots of heroic stuff going on.

Q. What are some things you saw at Pearl Harbor?

A. The attack on Pearl Harbor had already taken place when we got there. I remember going in and out when we were over there during the war. It was kind of like a headquarters. We would go out and bomb an island somewhere, and we would come back to Pearl Harbor. We were always watching. They had the ships that were sunk there. It was too early to get them all out of there. The battleship *Oklahoma* I remember. We used to watch it when we were entering and leaving, and we'd think about how long it took to get it off the bottom and get it up. We would look at the difference, and how it was setting up in the water each time we would come in. They'd seal off some compartments, and pump water out of it and make it float a little higher. We would look at stuff like that all the time. When we got there it had been a couple of years after Pearl Harbor. There was still a lot of damage, but most of the mess had been cleaned up from the sunken ships.

Later on, after we had taken some islands closer to Japan, we started anchoring around the harbors of some islands that had been captured. Ships would come in, and they would have supplies. We took on these supplies in the harbor and loading from a barge you could fill up in a hurry. You had to replenish your needs from bombs to food. Fueling while at sea was a lot simpler. In fact, I can remember we had a battleship on the far side of a tanker. We were on the other side of the tanker, and a destroyer was running on the other side of us.



The Kamikaze which hit the *Essex* on November 25, 1944.

We would be taking fuel off the tanker and also we would be giving the destroyer fuel which didn't need as much fuel. We would also have ships alongside bringing us mail and movies. We had movies when we weren't right in combat, where the enemy wasn't right close to us. You'd watch all you could get. Ships swapped them around before they sent them back.

Q. Did your ship ever get bombed?

A. We got hit one time with what they called a Kamikaze, or suicide plane. It was November 25, 1944. There were 15 killed and 44 wounded. He didn't do enough damage to put us out of action. In about 30 minutes, we had it all cleared up and back in action, even thought he made a hole in the side of the ship. They had big plates of metal that they had tied up along the edge of the hanger deck. Then a welder would cover a hole and get it fixed pretty quick.

Q. Where were you when this happened?

A. We were close to Luzon which is the northern part of the Philippines. The plane was a Japanese Judy. Most all the Japanese planes were identified with women's names. Betty was a Japanese torpedo bomber, and the Judy was a dive bomber. Their main fighter was called a Zero.

Air Group 15 was the most popular one. It was headed by Commander David McCampbell. He was the top Naval ace of World War II. He shot down over 30 Japanese planes. I can't remember how many exactly. I think he died last year. I read it in the paper. He later got to be captain of a ship. After he retired from the Navy, he settled in Florida. He was around 80 when he died. On one flight he shot down nine Japanese planes in 90 minutes.

Q. How long were you in the Navy, and when did you come home?

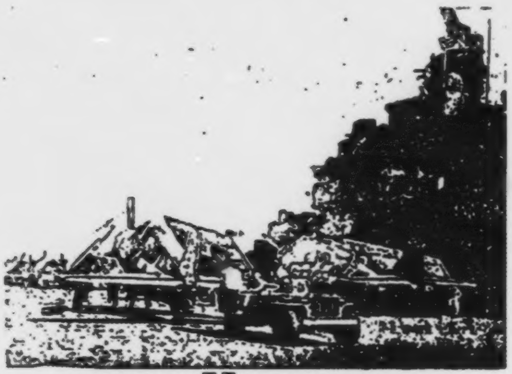
A. I was in the Navy almost three years. I went in March, 1943 and I was discharged in January, 1946. If I'd stayed in a couple of months longer it would have been exactly three years. I was probably in a combat area two years from the time I got over there to the time I got back.

Q. Were you ever wounded in combat?

A. The closest I ever came to being wounded was that the Japanese were always ready to attack us, so there was a good chance of being hurt. The ships would travel as a group: two big aircraft carriers like I was on, maybe we'd have two smaller or Jeep carriers, maybe a couple of cruisers, then 15 or 20 destroyers around us. The Japs came out there. They were after us as we were doing the most damage. We were launching planes and doing a lot of damage.

We'd have what they called general quarters, and everyone had their own battle station. A friend of mine and I were on a deck back there. We looked up, and there was a Japanese plane, and it was coming close. The only thing I could think of was it was a torpedo plane. It was very close to the water. That's when they'd drop their torpedoes. We started running and we had a battle station up forward. I got back away from the deck. I saw the planes drop torpedoes, and all I could think of was we were fixing to get blasted. It seemed the best thing to do was get back away from the edges of the ship so we won't get blown off the side, for I thought there was going to be a really big explosion. Fortunately, the captain turned the ship with the torpedo plane, and one went down each side of the ship. We didn't get hit. The torpedo planes would get low and close to the water. Then you could shoot the water in front of them, and they would run into it. That worked sometimes to discourage them.

MOVING A DAMAGED PLANE.



MOVING HELLCATS TO TAKE-OFF POSITION.

The closest I ever got to being shot was with one of our own guns. Another ship was shooting at the Japs and hit us. There were seven sailors there right where I was, and they all got hit. I don't think anyone was killed. One sailor who was young like me was scared to death. He got hit and had a spot on his chest that was bleeding. He was crying and saying he didn't want to die. I had to throw him down before he got hit again. I found out later it was just a skin wound, and it wasn't serious. I think only one of the seven was seriously wounded, but wasn't serious enough to send him to sick bay for two or three weeks.

Q. What was your assignment on the *Essex*?

A. Some people had more than one job. When you went to general quarters you got a battle station. When I first went aboard, I got a job as plane captain. What you did is you had a pilot and a plane, and you're his plane captain. You took care of his plane. He got in a plane and went off and bombed somebody, then he comes back in and hits the deck. He has this landing hook that he hits and that stops him. When he gets out of it, you get in it. He's through with it. Someone's got to be in it when they start moving it on deck. They would pull those planes with jeeps. Sometimes they got up to 35 m.p.h.. Your job was then to take care of it. Sometimes you would wash it down and be sure it had fuel. The pilot didn't have to see to any of that. The plane I was checking was a F4F Wildcat fighter. Later they changed to the F6F Hellcat, which was a better plane.

I had already got another assignment. You inspected the plane when it came in and see if it had been shot up. You went through to see if you could find where the plane had been hit. Planes came in sometimes when they had lots of holes in them, but not enough serious damage to knock them down. Maybe a wing had holes in it and needed a little repairing. I was a plane captain for a long time.

I got to know a Lieutenant Sullivan. He took care of stuff like the band. The band was in his division in fact. I slept in the same compartment as the ship's band. He had the guys that did KP. He was in charge of a variety of duties that had to be done. I met him when I was a plane captain. He was having problems with the ship's incinerator which took care of all the trash. Now this doesn't sound like much of a function, but he asked me to transfer and take charge of the incinerator, which I did. I liked the job. I had 13 guys that I was in charge of. Trash was another thing that was a problem. We didn't have garbage. The kitchens had garbage disposals. Paper and such had to be had to be burned. We had to take care of all that stuff.

If you got in close to the enemy you couldn't burn. I had to know when the boys could burn trash. They wouldn't burn at night because of sparks. You've got enemy planes looking for you, and they'll spot you. So we had to follow the rules, and at times the trash might back up for two or three weeks. We couldn't burn the trash, and that would be a problem. One of the reasons he told me he wanted me to come over once a week was to come to his office for a special job. We would go to high ranking officer's offices and collect the confidential material. They wanted this burnt so people wouldn't see what we were doing or where we were going. Nobody could get hold of it. We would go around once a week and pick up all the stuff. He trusted me enough to take and burn it up so nobody would get a hold of it. The job was a good one.

After I changed jobs, I didn't have a battle station assignment. Before, when I was a plane captain, I had a battle station job too. I was assigned to a 20 millimeter battery. It was the smallest gun we had, and had a range of about 1400 yards. One guy said you could always tell how far a Japanese plane was by which gun was shooting at it.

We also had five inch guns which had a range of about five miles. They showed a Japanese plane to be further out. We also had 40 millimeter guns which were in between the other two in range and size. I shot at a lot of planes, but truthfully, I couldn't say that I hit one because there were so many shooters on the ship. When the planes got in close, everybody was shooting at them. All you could see was gun fire. I believe the *Essex* shot down 33 enemy planes, and that's pretty good for a ship.

After awhile they wanted me to go over to a gun, but Lieutenant Sullivan needed me back where I was. I went from my battle station at general quarters to what they call fire control or a damage control station. What you do in this area is if you were hit by a bomb in this certain area, you have people to fight the fire and report the damage. You just have people stationed all over the ship. Fortunately they transferred me on to that.

TURNER BRITTON A BIG LINDA DAVIS FAN.

A little while later is when we were hit by that Japanese plane right where

I had been manning guns there. He flew right into the gun I was stationed at. This was back when the Navy was segregated. Those guns were then manned by stewards. They cooked and served meals to officers. We had quite a few steward mates. Most of them were killed by that Kamikaze plane.

Q. Where were you when the war ended?

A. We were working right off of Tokyo. We had been bombing Japan, and dropping lots of bombs on Tokyo. We had planes on their way to Tokyo when they called and said the Japs had surrendered. Our planes just dropped their bombs in Tokyo Bay.

We were one of the first ships to come home after they said the war was over. We started to load up some passengers that had been there a really long time and had not had a break in a long time. We were one of the carriers that had been there a long time. In fact, at one time we were out at sea about 79 days without a break or anything. We had not dropped an anchor in 79 days. We were at sea there. The reason we were selected to come home first was because they had the carriers on a rotation where you get a break and then come in for a couple of weeks. Well, it came our time to come home, and some other aircraft carrier would get really hit. Then someone would have to fill in for them for a long time.

When the war was over, we loaded up a lot of personnel. We sailed from Tokyo to Bremerton, Washington. The ship was still there when I was discharged. I probably got discharged three or four months after we retuned. The discharge system they had set up was the length of service you had. Each compaign you had down counted too. So I got discharged and returned home here.

Lincoln King, Turner Britton, Nichole Burns, and Amanda Porter sharing memories.

I came back and went to work, like everybody else, and got myself going. I wound up in Houston and drove a bus for the city, and also Greyhound for a short time. I quit bus driving and enrolled at Stephen F. Austin State University in 1949. I went there two years in 1949 and 1950. In the meantime I had gotten married in Houston. There wasn't much money, and I was having trouble making it. So I quit school and went back to work. I returned to Houston and went to work for Southern Pacific Railroad for a time. I couldn't get enough hours there, so my nephew and I went to work for an oil company. We traveled around doing oil business.

I got the experience of running a drilling rig, so I started doing water well service. I bought my own rig and moved back home drilling water wells. I worked the oil patch for quite a few years and went all over the central United States.

Q. When did you finally move back home?

A. I'm going to say 1972. I can't remember the exact day. We moved to Lake Murvaul. I was married and had two kids., My wife didn't like East Texas. We didn't have a shoot out like many marriages do . She wanted me to move out to West Texas, but I couldn't with my drilling rig. So she loaded up and went west. After about five years, she got a divorce. She remarried, but I never did. I figured once is enough.

Q. What do you enjoy doing now?

A. I bought the drilling rig and drilled water wells until 1991. I sold my drilling rig to a man in Dotson. I retired after that, but I still keep busy doing lots of things.

JOHN SEARCY

John Searcy is another example of an East Texas farm boy who grew up between the wars in an uncomplicated world of familiar surroundings. Then, with the threat of war apparent in 1941, he joined the Navy to become an aviator. John Searcy went on to a variety of combat roles in the Pacific against the Japanese. He became a highly decorated fighter pilot in winning a Navy Cross, a Distinguished Flying Cross, eight Air Medals, and a Purple Heart. Then with his Naval Service over, he returned again to Beckville to marry, raise a family, and finally to a well deserved retirement. We thank Susan Metcalf Calomino for introducing us to John Searcy.

JOHN SEARCY, AGE 18, WITH DEER FRIEND.

I was born in Beckville, Texas on March 22, 1919. My mother had a midwife to help on my delivery at home. My family was just an ordinary farm family. I had really good parents. They did all they could for me. I was raised on the farm. For money, I had a cattle horse, one of the best of the countryside. People used to hire my horse, really. Of course, I got to ride him. They hired the horse because he was good with cattle.

I drove an old truck to haul cotton to the gin. I picked a little cotton in my time, too. My father was a pretty good nail-bending carpenter. I helped him with that. We built a couple of honky-tonks in those days. A fellow by the name of Monny Langston decided to build a dance hall on the river. We went down there on a Monday morning. He said he wanted it ready for dancing on Saturday night. It was ready, thanks to us.

After schools in Beckville, I went on to Texas A&M and was there for three and a half years. Then, with war coming I went into the Navy to become an aviator. I did my Primary Training in Florida. I still wasn't an Aviator Cadet then. I had been sworn in as a Second Class Seaman. The pay was quite good to what I was used to. I then went to Pensacola, Florida, for Intermediate Training. I had one experience there that I think was note-worthy. I almost busted out of training there. The reason was that some of the flight instructors were Marines, some petty. I showed up one afternoon to take his parachute out to the plane. I had my tie tucked in my shirt because I had been gassing up planes. He just went ballistic, and before I even crawled in that plane, said, “You'll never make a pilot.” He tried to make it come true and get me out of flight school.

I found out that one fellow before me had been in a similar situation. He went to see the Captain of the base. So I went in to see him, and he wouldn't even look up at me. He said, “We've got a lot of Cadets and not many airplanes. We just can't mess with anybody that's having any trouble.” I said, “Well, it seems to me that I ‘ought to get to say something.” He jumped up about four feet out of his chair, and looked at me and said, “Well, what's your trouble?” I replied “Well, really, I wasn't shown how to do anything, and they tried to check me on it before I even had any knowledge of what to do.” He then said, “Well, I don't think you're so bad. I'll send you back out.”

I thus got another chance to finish flight training with another squadron. Have you ever seen the movie, “Baa Baa Black Sheep?” Pappy Boyington was the Marine flier and hero in the show. Before that took place, he was a flight instructor. He was the guy who was my check pilot. This was before he went to China as a member of the Flying Tigers.

PAPPY BOYINGTON

Anyway Pappy said, “Let's see what you got here.” We got in the airplanes and went into a slow roll on the takeoff. He said, “How'd you like that? I said, "That was pretty good, but I don't know how to do it.” He replied, “I'll show you.” He did, and then I did one. He just turned the plane around and returned to the ground. He told me, “Well, I'll give you another check,” and I was able to go on and finish training and become a Naval Aviator thanks to that man.

This story of Pappy Boyington and me goes a long way. At the end of the war in August, 1945, I was flying over Japan looking for prisoners of war camps. I came upon one place that had a big sign on top of a building which read, “Pappy's Here.” Then I flew back to the Bennington, the carrier I was based on. I bought a box of cigars and rigged me up a little parachute. I then returned to that POW camp and dropped them there with a note that said, “Thanks Pappy.” That was my way of payback for his getting me through training.

Also, while I was having that bad time during training, a couple from Beckville showed up at the gate at Pensacola. They took me out to dinner. This old boy was working on the Bankhead Tunnel at Mobile. He and his wife carried me out to the beach at Pensacola, actually we went over to Panama City, and we had a great afternoon. It kept up my spirits, and I got through training.

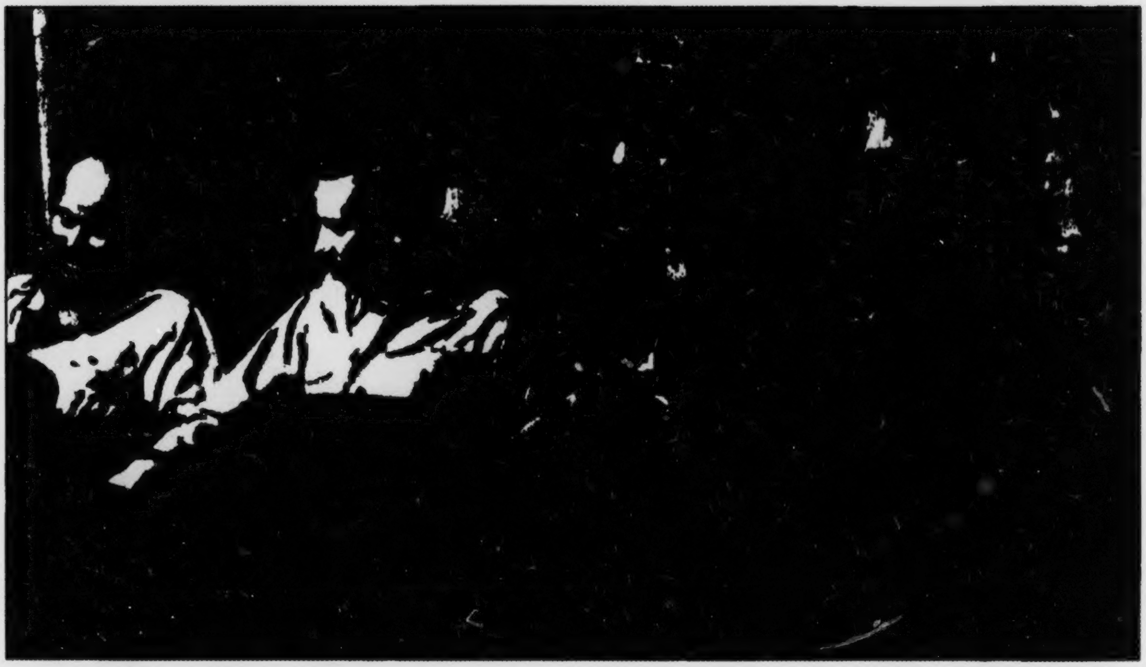
From Pensacola I went back to Miami for advanced training. Our class graduated in September, 1941. I got my wings in Miami about the same time. I was also commissioned as an Ensign. I went from there to Corpus Christi and became a flight instructor. I was there on December 7, 1941, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and we entered World War II.

I have had quite a few experiences that don't have to do with being shot at. It was quite interesting when I was instructing cadets in gunnery. I used to have a wager with the whole group of them. There were five of them and one of me. Our little wager was that we all put a quarter in the pot, and if the cadets could out shoot me, they'd win. One time, one of the cadets, Bill Franks, was an All American football player from Minnesota. They really wanted him to get through training, and I was doing all I could to help the old boy out. One day we went out, and it was his last chance to qualify in gunnery. That was done by firing your machine guns at sleeve targets to see who had the most hits and to see who had won. You could tell one from another. I wondered how all of them had out shot me. I mean, after all, I did it everyday, and two or three times each day. They really didn't have a chance to beat me. It would be like some high school kid trying to out shoot Michael Jordan.

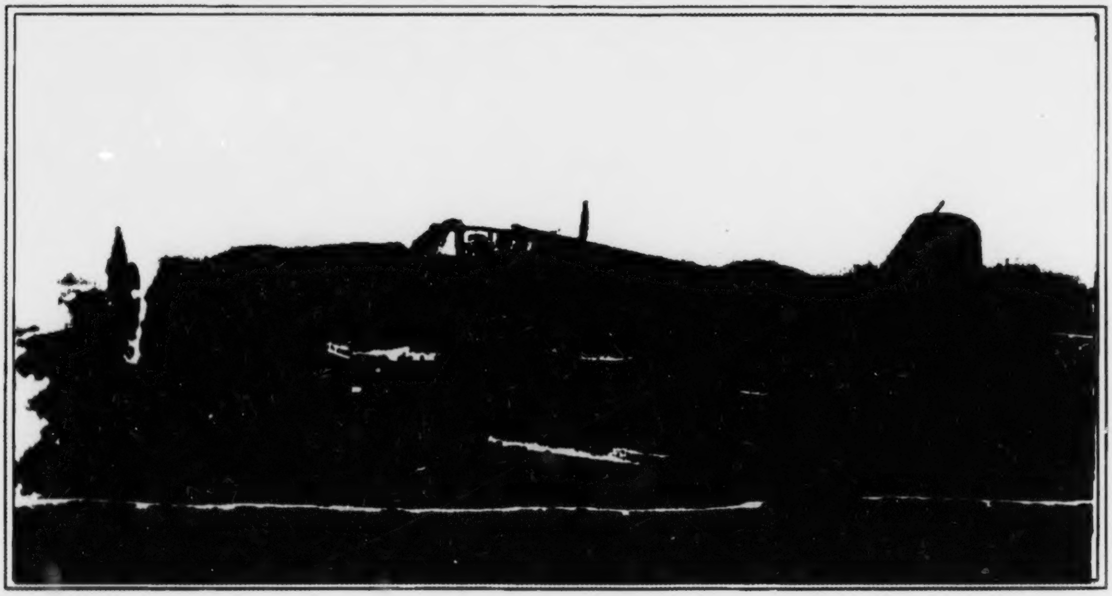
Anyway I looked at my sleeve, and I had absolutely no hits. Those cadets had torn their sleeve up that day. Bill Franks had some 25 hits. He usually had one or two hits on a sleeve. I told him, "Well, the chief has got the pot in there, go get it." Then I walked in and asked, "Chief, who loaded our guns today?" He replied, "Oh, the cadets did it. They put a rainbow of colors in the ammunition, and none of it yours." They all qualified that day.

We used to do dive bombing the same way. We'd take power runs of dive bombing and drop five miniature bombs. I'd always out hit the cadets. This was a simple little matter to me. I'd throw them just a little bit high, and when I got a good run, I'd release them all on one run. Then I'd wait until I got a good run again. They never did catch on to what I was doing. I out did them everytime.

So I stayed there and instructed until 1943. Then I went from there to an overseas assignment. I joined a fighter squadron flying the F4F Grumman Wildcat. The squadron leader was Bill Dean who had been a flight instructor with me at Kingsville. So three of us former instructors joined him to replace fliers who had been lost on his previous tour . It was Fighter Squadron Two assigned to



READY ROOM *U.S.S HORNET*-OCT. '44-JOHN SEARCY-RIGHT



FRONT
JOHN SEARCY IN HIS HELLCAT FIGHTER

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

JOHN SEARCY'S HELLCAT GOING INTO THE WATER AFTER BEING SHOT DOWN.

JOHN SEARCY GETTING OUT OF DOWNED PLANE.

JOHN SEARCY HOLDING LIFE RING THROWN FROM SUBMARINE *STINGRAY*.

JOHN SEARCY BEING CARRIED TO SAFETY BY *STINGRAY*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

the aircraft carrier *Hornet.*

That was quite an experience. We went from Makin to Manila. We also went to a few islands in between there such as Truck, Palau, Iwo Jima. I got on the *Hornet* and attacked the Marshall and Gilberts Islands too, as well as operations against the Marianas. By this time we were flying the F6F or Hellcat fighters. I flew 26 missions in five major battles.

I hit the water twice, one time when I was shot down by antiaircraft fire on the island on Guam. I guess a gun battery there outshot me. I ended up looking for a submarine to pick me up after I went into the water. I was still flying or limping along looking for the sub. I looked up and saw a Japanese bomber heading for the sub that was supposed to pick me up. Now I was there with the engine quitting on me, oil coming out of the engine. I could hardly see anything and was just about to go down. I turned into him and fired one burst. Then my squadron mates who were trailing me shot down the Japanese bomber. So I went on and landed in the water. At the time, people on the sub were taking pictures, so I wound up in a couple of movies since then, *Midway* and *Operation Pacific.* The submarine brought me back to a base, so I was able to rejoin my squadron. I was on the sub long enough to earn an award which showed I had a successful combat cruise on a sub which was the *Stingray.*

I didn't get paid for those movie roles. One of them was the film, "*Midway.*" It was showing a Hellcat, number 32 coming around there, and all at once I dipped a wing and spun into the water. There's a fellow floating around out there, and that was old John Searcy from Beckville. That was the second time I was into the waters, no, it was the first time. The second time I just had an engine failure on the way home. It was just a bad engine. You know, you can't take an airplane and pull over to the side of the road, raise the hood, and see what's wrong. You have to get her down and get out some way or other.

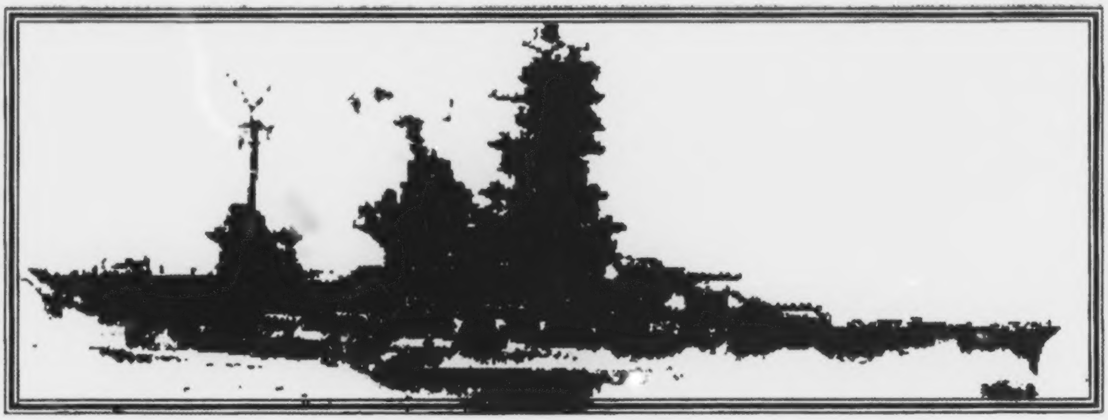
So after 26 missions and five major battles, the squadron broke up in October, 1944. I was then assigned to a fighter-bomber oufit flying a Corsair. We trained in various places. We learned how to fire rockets and get our machine guns all squared away. We trained in cold weather. Then we were sent back to the Pacific where it's mostly warm weather. The only place we ran into cold weather was Hokkaido, the northern most island of Japan in July, 1945. We were assigned to the aircraft carrier *Bennington.*

I finished up the war in raids over and against Japan. A lot of these raids were in going after Kamikazes or suicide planes that were on the ground. By then the Japanese were not able to send their planes to fight against us in the air. There was a rumor they were saving the Kamikazes so they could go after troop transports when the Americans tried to invade Japan.

I was also involved on a raid of the Japanese naval base at Kure. The day of July 24, 1945 started by my getting up and going to the wardroom for breakfast. This was on the aircraft carrier *U.S.S. Bennington* (CV-20). I then went back up to the ready room. I looked up on the board and found my name. I think Beardmore was my wingman. Robert Lang (I have a son and grandson named after him), and "tail-end Charlie," a fellow named (Jorgeson) were the other two. "Jorgy" was an old bulldozer man before he got in the Navy. He was short and stocky, built stout. He'd follow me anywhere. We made up the four plane flight I lead that day as the Team Leader.

Our target was the Kure naval base. Our four planes were carrying 500 pound bombs that day. We didn't carry our usual supply of rockets, but did have our machine guns loaded. We started on our approach to Kure. It would have been pretty if it hadn't been such a dangerous and scary situation. The anti-aircraft fire filled the sky with colored smoke. It was a little cloudy when we went in, and we had trouble finding a target. We were going to dive and bomb "targets of opportunity," meaning we'd try to hit whatever we could find. We were after the large capital ships of the Japanese Navy.

The anti-aircraft fire and clouds were so thick so we couldn't see anything, and were about ready to just return to the *Bennington*. You just couldn't find a target. All of a sudden, something went off under me and kicked the plane up on its side. I looked down, and there was a battleship right below me. I kicked over and went down. I had a really good run, and I knew I couldn't miss. I fired my machine guns on the way and followed the path shown by the tracer bullets as they hit the Ise. I went lower down than usual before I released the bomb as I



BATTLESHIP "*ISE*"

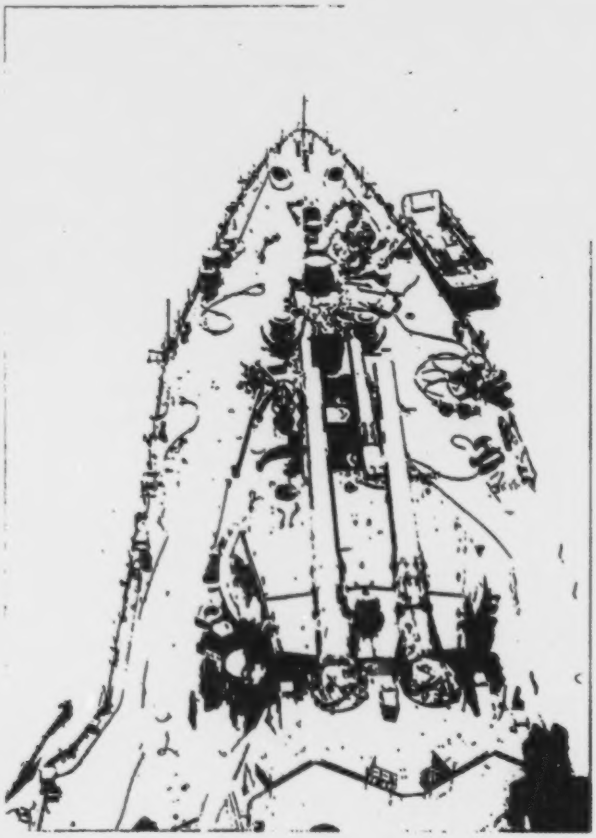
wanted to be sure I made a hit. I didn't want to go back the next day and try it again. I pulled out and kind of glanced back. I could tell some hits were going on in back of me. I really didn't know what had happened until I got out to the side there. I got the guys to join up. Land gave me the signal that I had a hit.

Commendation for the Navy Cross (the navy's highest decoration) to Lt. John M Searcy:

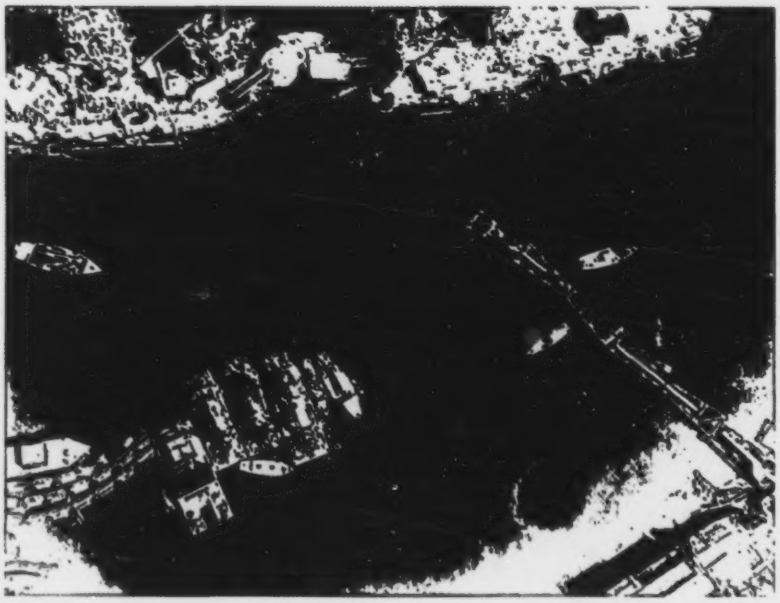
"For extraordinary heroism while serving as pilot of a carrier based fighter plane in an attack against major units of the Japanese Fleet, including aircraft carriers, battleships, cruisers and destroyers at the Kure Naval Base on 24 July, 1945. Despite intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire from the warships and the numerous shore batteries, which hit and damaged his plane, he dived to a perilously low level to score a direct bomb hit on the battleship assigned as his target. Under his skillful and valiant leadership, his division of four planes scored two direct hits, inflicting critical damage to the vessel, and contributed immeasurably to the success of the Task Force attack. His conspicuous skill and courage were at all times inspiring and in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

Japanese Battleship *ISE* Under
Air Attack at Kure,
24 July 1945, by John Searcy's
planes

Japanese Battleship, *ISE*
Sunk off Kure,
Note 14" guns
Also Note Bomb Hole
Near Front of #1 Turret
(Right)



Japanese Ship *ISE* Sunk
off Kure
(Below)



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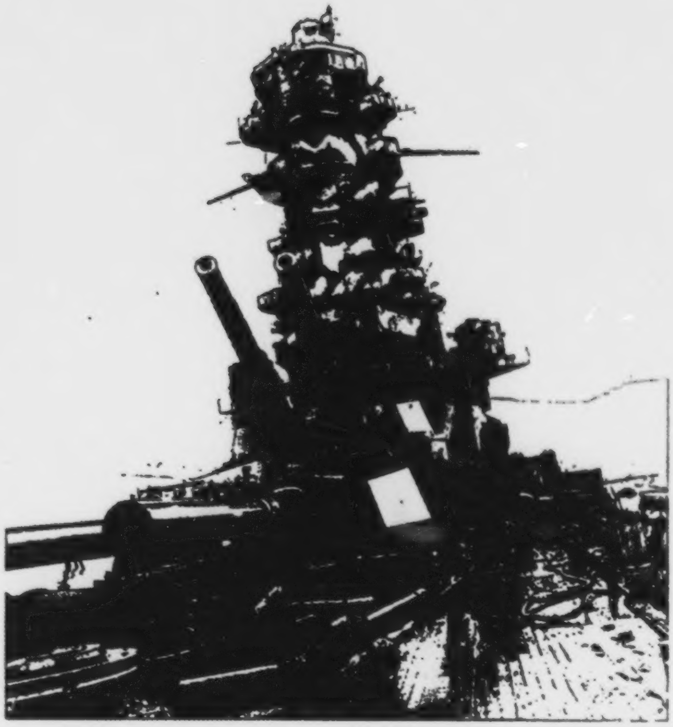
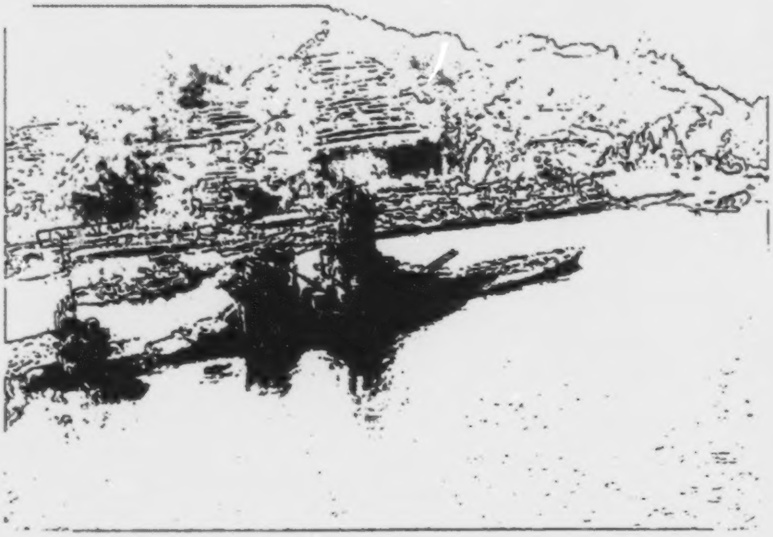


JAPANESE BATTLESHIP
ISE SUNK AT KURE,
NOTE 14" GUNS.



JAPANESE BATTLE
SHIP *ISE* SUNK OFF
KURE, JAPAN,
NOTE CARRIER
AMAGI SUNK IN
DISTANCE

Lang said he didn't release. So we made a big turn out there in the harbor. We spotted a cruiser over in the harbor that was still afloat. We didn't have enough altitude for dive bombing, so we joined Lang who went in to "skip-bomb instead. We called him "Big Hoss" because he was a former Georgia Tech tackle. We made the "skip-bombing" run, and I know he made a hit because I saw it. That is when you try to throw the bomb and hit the side of the ship. It's almost like making a torpedo run. We used to "skip bomb" with napalm to hit ground targets like the side of a mountain.

Now, let's get back to the bombing of the battleship, Lang said my bomb hit about mid-ships. My wingman, Beardmore, got his hit just a little forward of mine, and the number four man, Jorgeson, hit on the aft part of the ship. Jorgeson almost hit the ship he went so low. "Old Jorgy," his plane was kind of messed up a little from having to pull up so hard. Then we made a run on the cruiser.

There was a torpedo bomber flying around alone, and indicated to us that damage had knocked out his instruments. So, I just signaled to him to join up with us. We started back then, and another straggler, also a Corsair, joined up with us on the other side. So, there were five Corsairs and one torpedo plane flying together. We delivered the torpedo bomber to the Lexington Then the rest of us went back to the *Bennington*, for the straggler was from our ship too.

I had a big hole in my right wing that I didn't even know about until I landed on the carrier. I wonder sometimes why that wing didn't give way on me. It was a pretty big hole. My machine guns located in the wings worked though. I went through the mission not thinking anything was wrong. The Corsair was tough, and when you dived, it did so at high speed. It let you get in and get out in a hurry.

We knew we had sunk the battleship Ise because somebody in another plane had taken pictures during the attack. That's how we got to confirm the three hits, plus the one on the cruiser. The battleship just sank and settled into the harbor at Kure. It was on its way down when we left the Kure area. Water was coming up ever the decks. We sank all their shipping there. We had total control of the air over Japan by that stage of the war.

We'd fly over Japan looking for Kamikaze planes parked on roads waiting to take off to try to crash into our ships. We flew very low looking for these and other targets. We had them pretty well bombed and burned out. The atomic bomb was needed to finish off Japan because of how fanatic they were as an enemy.

I was still on the *Bennington* when I was awarded the Navy Cross for

LT. JOHN M. SEARCY

leading the attack on the Ise. That took place shortly afterwards. I had won a Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for action while on the *Hornet* before. I didn't receive the DFC until about a week before I got out of the Navy after the war was over. I also was awarded eight Air Medals during my combat tours.

I received a Purple Heart when wounded the time I was shot down. It was a pretty slight wound from shrapnel, but they had to take 57 stitches in my face where I hit the instrument panel when I hit the water. Luckily I was picked up by an American submarine.

My wingman also won a Navy Cross for hitting the battlewagon. My "tailend Charlie" received a Distinguished Flying Cross, and Lang did also. I was the leader of the four planes in the attack. I was glad we didn't have to return the next to try it again. Then the war was over shortly after that.

I stayed in the Navy until October, 1947. I served, after the war, on Admiral "Jocko" Clark's staff. I was his Personal Aide. Then I qualified in multi engine planes and also became one of his pilots. We flew around the country and got to see all the lower 48 states. I really enjoyed that part of it.

When I got out of the Navy, I first went into construction work. I also did some farming. In the wintertime I went to Wyoming or Kansas to work in cracking plants. It was a good, high paying job. I made enough money in the wintertime, through all that snow and ice, to take me over to the next year. I took the summer off, but did a little farming. Then I picked up enough experience to go to work at Thiokol at Karnak. They made solid fuel rockets. Then I went on to work for Texas Eastman in Longview for 26 years. I retired on my sixty-second birthday.

I've been enjoying life since then: raising a few cows, mowing the lawn, going fishing, just doing nothing. My wife is deceased. Her name was Katherine. We got married in 1949. She taught in the Beckville schools for 32 years. We had three children and also raised three grandchildren. I'll be 80 on March 22, 1999. I'm in pretty good shape for 80.

U.S.S Hornet reunion-1998-Arlington, Virginia-Nina Newman, granddaughter; Alice Searcy, daughter; John Searcy.

John Searcy, Amy Owens, and Katy vaughn of Loblolly.

BOB BEATY

We visited with our friend and neighbor Bob Beaty about his services and remembrances of World War II. As a young lad he went off to serve as a gunner with the Army Air Corps. He was a pioneer in that he flew with the first group to fly the B-29 " Super Fortress" bomber against the Japanese in the Far East. Mr. Beaty also got to see much of the world from the pyramids of Egypt to the great wall of China. And he had a role in training the crews which rained bombs on Japan and hastened the end of World War Ii.

I was born in north Louisiana. At the age of two months, I came to Texas. I went to Carthage schools all my life and graduated from high school many years ago. Since we were so much smarter, it only took us eleven years to get out of high school.

In December, 1941, I was working in Carthage at a service station. And on December 7th the news came over the radio that we were at war after the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. I was 18 years old at that time . Did the war effect me? It did! In January , 1943, I went into the Air Corps. It had always been my ambition to fly.

We trained first of all in Florida. It was a beautiful place there. We stayed at the best hotel and swam in the ocean. There was a beautiful beach. From there I went to Denver, Colorado. In Denver we trained to fly a plane that really existed on the drawing board. There were no B-29's, but we were training for them.

We needed something fast with a long range. We needed a plane to reach over the Japanese Empire. In Europe we had England for a base. We could bomb all over Europe from England. But that wasn't true in the Pacific. In Europe they might have a 3-4 hour mission, while in the Pacific we were going to have them 16-18 hours from China.

So we trained there. We had the B-29, remote control gunnery with central fire control like on a battleship. You'd move a little sight weighing three pounds, and that would move two turrets weighing 1500 pounds each. That was my job. I could direct the fire with my finger. So we built the big planes and tried them out. We flew XB-29's. We trained in Kansas. There were only four bases at the time for training on the B-29. We were the 40th Bomb Group. We got our planes ready and got the bugs out of them as much as we could. They were in a hurry for us. General "Hap" Arnold was in command of the Army Air Corps. He got us ready to go overseas.

One really cool morning in March, 1944, we took off. We knew we were going overseas, but we had no idea where. The front bombbay was loaded with all of our clothes. The back bombbay was loaded with spare parts for our planes. We took off and landed in Presque Isle, Maine. From there we flew to Newfoundland, called Gander Field. The snow was four foot deep on both sides of the runway, and snow fell with flakes the size of fifty cent pieces. We'd never seen anything like it. For a southern boy who had only seen snow three times in his life, it was a thrill.

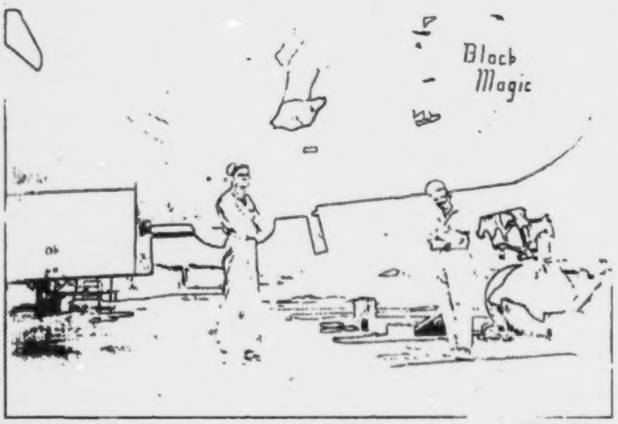
We took off again one night and could see the ice flows. We headed on a southeasterly course. As day light approached, and going east it made the night much shorter. The plane was a pretty good size; it was a 14 feet, 6 inches wide. It was 99 feet, 6 inches long. We got close to the coast of Africa. I said, to the pilot, "Skipper, what's happening?" We looked to our left and saw a large armada you might say (a big convoy of American ships). We didn't dare fly over them for very obvious reasons. They'd never seen a B-29, and if they thought we were a German plane, they'd have taken care of us in a short order. They had aircraft carriers which were heading into the wind to launch their planes, so we gave them a quick IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) so they'd know who we were. It was a radio signal code for a certain day, so you'd better have it right.

We pulled in just below Casablanca at an air base called Marrakech (on the coast of West Africa). The contrast from 26 degrees (in Newfoundland) to 110 degrees (in Africa) was very obvious when we landed. Everyone came and told us we were crazy. We had on our heavy flying suits. They came up asking for our canteens. We asked, "What in the world do you want with my canteen?" They replied, "We want a drink of cool water". You see it was so hot there they couldn't get any cool water. Water came out of Lister bags standing out in the sun. They were thrilled to have a drink of cold water.

From Marrakech we flew all the way across North Africa. We flew over where the battles had been fought by Patton and the German Africa Corp., where they had done their fighting. Then we flew over where Rommel had fought against Montgomery, the greatest of all the British generals. We could see where the ruined tanks were still spread out over the battlefields in the desert. We flew to where the desert came to an end, and we saw a big green strip in front of us. It was the Nile River, and we landed in Cairo, Egypt. They gave us the $3 tour. We flew around the pyramids and the sphinx and landed in Cairo. From there we went on to Karachi, India-called the Gateway to India. From there we flew to the eastern part of India, just out of Calcutta. We had four bases there.

These were the first B-29 's to go in combat. There were no airfields big enough for us. So the Indians built the airfields by hand. There would be strings of people like ants, and on their hips they would carry woven (some kind of fiber) trays. And the women would fill those trays with dirt and put the trays on their heads and then walk 300-400 yards or half a mile and then dump the dirt. They determined how fast they built the airfields. It wasn't working.

So they got in some of our troops-a detachment of Black engineers, and they built our airfields. See, our runways had to be 8,000 - 10,000 feet long to take off. Then it was time to fly our first mission on June 5, 1944. It was a really still morning. I was supposed to be assigned to one plane when they divided the crews up. But a major walked in and said, "I want a good central power control gunner." And they said, "Get Beaty, Major Koeing, he's from Texas too." And the major said, "I'll take him." It was a hot humid morning. The plane i should of been in that morning, I watched lift off. It was weighing 136,000 pounds. It had twenty - four 5,000 pound bombs on it. It had 8,000 gallons of gasoline and you know aviation gasoline is very high test. That plane lifted up in front of us. We were behind it. We gave it the old "Ding How" signal or thumbs up, wishing them the very best. We watched him lift up



Bob Beaty, on left, with B-29 "Black Magic," which he flew on combat missions.

and he lost his number one engine. He dropped and crashed in front of us on the runway where we were revving up getting ready to take off. As he crashed, his bombs began to blow up. All but one man in the crew was killed. One man was blown away from the plane still attached to his seat. That man lived.

We took off, and the exploding bombs threw our noses up in the air. It seemed like we flew with the tail hanging down for about ten miles. I said I was paddling along with one hand just above the tree tops. When we got past the explosion site, another bomb went off and kicked our tail up so we were level. We flew for 10-15 miles just above the tree tops, real sluggish. We pulled up and went to Bangkok in Thailand. It was a beautiful place. There I saw my first Japanese fighter. They were a beautiful sight to see. They were very trim, very well flown, excellent little ships. They could fly circles around us.

The tail gunner of the "Memphis Belle," one of the most famous B-17's of the European Theater, was in our squadron. He said, ":Bob the first enemy plane you see in the flight it doesn't matter if he is five miles off, shoot at him." I did! I was surprised! Those little red baseballs I was throwing at him out there (tracers shells were one of every five shells out our guns - also two armor piercing and two incendiary shells) showed me where I was shooting. I shot a few rounds, and they went right past his tail I said, "You son of a gun, you come up close, and I'll hit you." He found he had made a mistake because we weren't flying B-17's. He flew up over us, and I could see the puffs where I was hitting the plane. The last I saw of him, he was diving straight down. If I ever pulled out I don't know because when I looked out, our number one engine was feathering (stopping). We thought the enemy fighter had shot out the engine. We found out later that the engine had just malfunctioned. He flew back all the way like that through a thunderstorm and dropped 600 feet. We got back, but we did lose a few planes that day. I had a friend whose plane crashed; in the Bay of Bengal. Two of the men were drowned in the crash, two of the others floated all night and were picked up later on.

Then we began to fly over China. Do you remember what the Himalayan Mountains are? That's the largest mountain range in the world. Mt. Everest, the world's highest, is there. We flew across there, called "The Hump," from India to China. We were fighting the war on a shoe string. Everything was going to the Eurorean Theater because we were going to invade Germany after going into France from Normandy. And we were not able at the time to manufacture enough stuff to fight a war on two fronts. So we were literally "poor-boying" the war against Japan.

We flew our gasoline ourselves across "The Hump" into China and stockpiled it. We carried our bombs into China for the same purpose. The Chinese bases were built by hand . They would bring the rocks in from a river bed and crush them into little pieces. I have a picture somewhere of the Chinese pulling big rollers. There would be 150-200 of them pulling a large roller to press down the gravel to make it hard enough so that we could take off from the runways they'd made.

BOB BEATY AND B-29 - THE CAMELS SIGNIFY FLIGHTS OVER "THE HUMP."

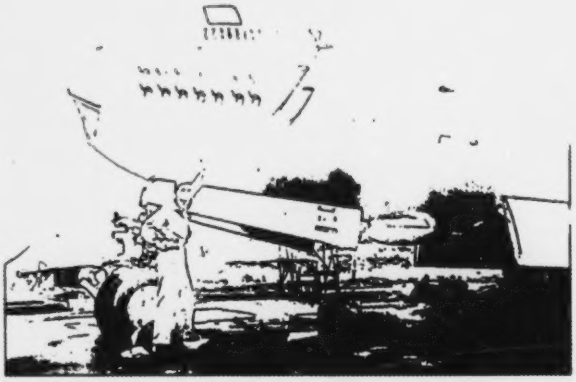
We pulled our first mission, the first one flying from China after we moved from flying out of India. We flew to Manchuria (north China) which you know is adjacent to Russia. We flew all across China to reach a still mill at Anshan just south of Mukden. We bombed those several times and knocked a great deal of their coke producing capacity out. We lost planes, and we lost men. We came back one day, and we were in our briefing room. We always showed our missions on a large chart. And they had sheets over them. And on this particular day they had two sheets. I was in there looking at that long sheet, checking to see where we were going today. I looked up and they had a red string going from our base in China to the Japanese home island Kyushu (southern Japan). So we were the first Americans after the Doolittle Raid to hit the Japanese home islands.

The Japanese did not think we could make that long mission. They couldn't do it, so they didn't think we could either. We flew that mission and bombed Yawata, the largest steel mill in Japan. We lost planes and men on that raid too. Then we came back and flew down and bombed Singapore. When we invaded the Philippines, we bombed the island of Formoss (now Taiwan). The Japanese had large air bases there.

We came back, and so they asked us to bomb Singapore. That had been a British strong point in the Far East. The Japanese had taken it intact in 1942. There they had the largest repair facility for naval ships in the world. The Japanese were well using it. So they asked us to bomb it. On that mission we were in the air over 16 hours. We carried two 2,000 pound bombs. In Singapore harbor there was a large dry dock - the King George Dry dock. We bombed it, and our aiming point was the little control tower. When you knocked it out, you knocked the dry-dock out of commission. We bombed it and we had excellent bombardiers. We had good men that made the crews. We knocked out that dry-dock. And there was also 320 foot ships in the dry-dock, and we put it over on its side and put it out of commission.

LOADING BOMBS ON B-29

Then they came back and asked us to bomb Palambang, Sumatra. That was a large gasoline refinery where Japan was getting 85% of its aviation gas. As you know, no army can fight without fuel, especially in this time. The Japanese had to have that fuel. So we flew down to a British base on the little island of Ceylon. It only had one runway fit for our use. We had to take off down wind. We took off and were 18 hours in the air on the mission. We bombed the refinery, and in dropping our bombs in the refinery, it caused a flash. You can imagine what it did to mile after mile of storage tanks. Some of our planes went in 100 feet over the river, where the river came up to the refinery, and the Japanese tankers were docked there, and they dropped mines in the river. This was the first time in the war that B-29's were used to drop mines. The mine was a round object with very sensitive fuses all over it and explosives inside. You dropped it in the river, and it would float along. The Japanese didn't realize they were there, and their tankers would come up the river, and they would hit a mine, and that would take care of the tanker. We were very successful with that.

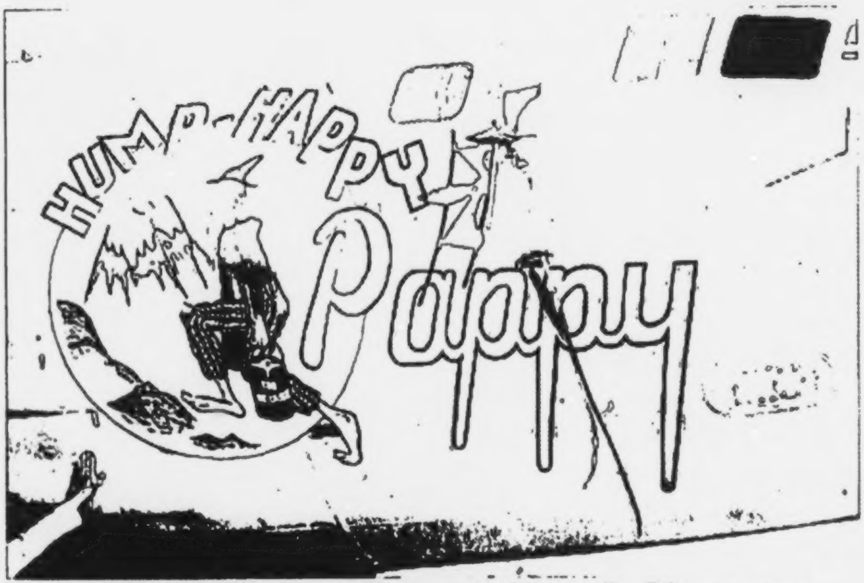


We flew missions all over that part of the country there. We flew to Swatow, Amoy, and places like that. We lost a lot of men. More were lost to mechanical problems than to enemy opposition. We had new planes and had to get the bugs out of them. We were new crews with new types of planes. Nobody could train us. We had more combat time than anybody in the area.

One morning the Major came skidding a corner in his jeep with the funniest look on his face. He said, "Get the boys out of here." We imagined we were being volunteered for another rough mission because we were a lead crew. That is, we were the ones who would go in first in formation on a mission. The other planes would come in behind us. When we dropped our bombs, every plane in that formation would drop their bombs at the same time. We would saturate the target. And doing that, you could literally wipe the target out.

The Major come up to us and said, "Boys, you're going to fly "Hump Happy Pappy" (a B-29 bomber) back to the States." We were chosen because we had more combat time, and because they had a special project for us. We took the old plane and found there were 128 holes in its side. The Japanese, during the raid in China, had dropped a fragmentation bomb down beside it and filled the plane with holes. It looked like somebody had fired a shotgun at the plane.

First off, we tried to get the plane in running condition so we could take off. The bombbay doors had to be wired shut to keep them from opening. We worked on the engines. Finally, the morning came to fly back to the States. You have no idea. It was like a reprieve from death for us. Out of approximately 120 of us who started the tour, there was 16--18 of us left of the original crews who went



" HUMP HAPPY PAPPY"-THE B-29 WHICH FLEW BOB BEATY HOME.

over there. By attrition our numbers had really gone down.

We fixed the old plane up and had it ready to run. We were going to fly it all the way back to San Antonio, Texas. To me, that was coming home. The morning we left, everyone on the base came out to watch, for we were the first combat men to head back for the States. The whole base turned out for us. We took the old plane and started up and got to the end of the runway. The tower gave us the green light, meaning take off, you're clear to go. We pulled up about, 2,000 feet, everybody was waving at us and Major Koenig (the pilot) said, "Hang on boys, we're fixing to drag the runway." Can you imagine a plane 141 feet wide coming down a runway 30 feet off the ground while buzzing it. We came down, and we buzzed that runway. The tower flashed the green light telling us to, "Go on, go on, go on." And we did. The Colonel was on the runway in a jeep. We almost blew him out of the jeep. He made a very obscene gesture as we went by.

We flew all the way to Karachi. We didn't fly back like we went over. We flew from Karachi to where the Nile Rivers come together, the Blue Nile and the White Nile at a place called Kartoum in Africa (Sudan). From there we flew across the central part of Africa just below the Sahara Desert to the Gold Coast on Africa's west coast. And I watched carefully on the ground, I wanted to see a herd of elephants. I never did, but we saw lots of beautiful country. From there we flew across to Natal, Brazil, on the extreme eastern coast of Brazil. We landed there and then flew on to a British base at British Guiana. Then we flew on to the United States, West Palm Beach, Florida. That was a beautiful sight. We flew over a city with the lights on. We had been used to having cities being blacked out.

We noticed they came out to spray our plane to get rid of any disease bearing insects. They came out before we even got off the plane. The customs people wanted to check us out. Somebody had told them we had a monkey on the plane. We didn't; we had a pet monkey but we had left her in India. They finally let us out of there, and we flew the plane all the way back to San Antonio. Then we were off for 30 days and then went on to the West Coast where they had a rest and recreation place (R & R). You usually stayed there a couple of months to get over combat fatigue. Then you were assigned to a new crew.

When I arrived there (the R & R place) to sign in, there was a line of us. The radio operator (from before) was with me. I said, "I'm Sergeant Bob Beaty." They replied, "Mr. Beaty, wait a minute, don't move." I wondered, "What have I done wrong now." I was worried because I had done a lot of wrong things and thought they were just catching up with me. The had a big red tag stuck on my name -- "Sgt. W. R. Beaty--Earmarked Project H.L.K." I said, "I have my radio operator with me, Sergeant McKaine." They said, "J. C. McKain?" We said, "That's right." So they told me, "Would you and Mr. McKain please step aside." We said, "Oh, oh, they got both of us."

We were earmarked for that special project, "H.L.K" We were pulled out and sent back to Roswell, New Mexico. Just outside of Roswell was a place called Los Alamos. That's the place where the first atomic bomb was exploded. So we felt we were being pulled back to drop the atomic bomb, for we were a lead crew, a special group. But they didn't have the bomb ready. So while looking around, they put us in the Training Command. Then we went to Las Vegas where we trained the new crews before they went overseas. I was there until the end of the war.

In the meantime, in the war in the Pacific, Americans had captured the Mariana Islands. This included Saipan, Tinian, and Guam. Guam was an old American base we had for a long time before. It was taken by the Japanese early in the war, but then we got it back. The shooting had not ceased before we started building air bases there. They built some of the largest bases in the world. The B-29's started their raids on Japan from those islands. They began bombing their cities.

Japan was frailly built with few modern buildings. They had a lot of wooden buildings. The steel and stone buildings were in a minority there. General Curtis Le May stayed in close touch and wanted to know how we did on our missions. He had lots of questions. Soon they had over a thousand B-29's over those islands.

In Japan they had something we don't have here. The winds from 5,000 to 25,000 feet moved so fast, 300 miles an hour, you couldn't synchronize your bombing sight. You were going too fast. So General Le May sent the planes in at 5,000 to 7,000 feet and loaded with incendiary bombs. In a short time, less than 12 months, they had bombed out over 80% of the industrial production of Japan. They burnt their cities. And in doing this, they saved us from having to invade the main island of Japan. And all historians agree that the bombing of Japan into submission saved over a million and a half casualties for the United States alone. And that doesn't count the Japanese who would of lost their lives. The Japanese are fanatical fighters who never gave up, so it would have been a bloody invasion campaign. They had to be killed in a battle. Experience had shown that only one percent would surrender, and the civilian population were armed with sharpened bamboo stakes in order to skewer the Americans.

So it sounds like a terrible thing when they came to drop the atomic bomb.

The first one was dropped on Hiroshima and over 50,000 people were killed. The second one was dropped on Nagasaki, a large seaport town. It was protected by hills and valleys so there was not as much destruction. The atomic bombs gave Japan the option of saving face to surrender with honor by Emperor Hirohito. The day they signed the peace treaty on the battleship USS Missouri over 1,000 planes flew over as a show of force. So World War II was decided by air power.

We lost many men and planes, but it was well worth it. We had the privilege of flying one of the greatest planes ever built, the B-29. They were big 141 feet, 6 inches wide and 99 feet and 6 inches long. It was a beautiful thing. I have no regrets as to my service.

The only thing I wish I had done was take more pictures of some of the beautiful places I saw. I flew the Hump (the Himalayan Mountains) between India and China. I believe the Grand Canyon could have been hidden in some of the valleys I saw. Those mountains went up higher than we flew. They said they were 26,000 feet. We'd be flying at 28,000 feet and still have to look up to see the mountain tops. They were covered with snow and were a beautiful sight.

You came into China, and you could see the people with their little hills and terraces to grow rice in. In India the cattle roamed the streets, and the people wouldn't eat the cattle. That was because of their religious beliefs. In China I remember they used all available land; very little of it was lost for production. They didn't understand disease and lived with water pollution. We were afraid to eat their fresh fruits and vegetables. They would make you sick. We ate their peanuts and sugarcane safely. In India we had no eggs. All we had was powdered eggs from the United States. In China we got a big thrill when we were given fresh eggs. The Chinese people were very much on our side. If you bailed out over territory occupied by the Japanese, the Chinese there would be ready to save you before you hit the ground,. Entire villages were wiped out if it became known the people had helped American fliers escape. We had what was called CHIP bags which said in Chinese, "These are your friends, the American fliers. Help them get back to their base. The government of Chiang Kai - shek will give you a reward for this." Many died getting our boys out.

At the little cemetery out here at Antioch there is a boy named George Williamson buried. His brother, Travis, flew planes in Europe. George was in my squadron. George made it through the war. When the war was over, they were flying mercy missions to supply Prisoners of War (POW's) using B-29's. His plane crashed, and he was killed then. Others from here flew in B-29's.

Jesse Le Blanc was one of them, and Walter Mauritzen, he was on our base in India. C.B. Marshall was on our base in India several times. So we ran into people from Texas.

The war was a terrible experience, but I wouldn't take anything for having served in it. I love my country and people, and by the grace of God, I came through the was.

I have four battle stars for my Pacific Campaign Medal and two Air Medals. I had a recommendation for a Distinguished Flying Cross. None of those I earned by myself. We were a close knit crew. They were great people. I still hear from many of them. And I was privileged just a few weeks ago to have a stranger drive up in my front yard and introduce himself by saying, "I'm John McKain." He was the radio operator I had flown with against the Japanese. I hadn't seen him in 45 years. It was a joy to see him.

I had a lot of what were called points to get the honorable discharge. The nation had been booming with a war economy. The first thing they wanted me to do was sign up for unemployment. I was too proud for that. So I began carpentry. I had worked for the railroad before I went to the military. Then an opening came up in Carthage at the Depot. And I was able to put in 40 years with the Santa Fe Railroad. I was married for 29 years and had one daughter. I had a divorce and married again, and my wife has spoiled me for the past 13 years. We have some wonderful grandchildren.

I have seen amazing changes in my lifetime. I have seen oxen hauling logs and hooked to carts. And I have seen man put his foot on the moon. I saw the plane I thought was the greatest ever become obsolete, and I saw the propellers taken off planes and the jets come in. I came back after the war and realized the American dream, to have a home, and an automobile, and see the finest schools and medical care anywhere. I am so proud of our nation. I learned to appreciate these things during the war. When you face death on a daily basis, your priorities change, as do your values. You learn to appreciate each day. I'm almost 70 years of age now. I don't think of that being old yet. I pray that we won't have to fight in another war.

I would like to close this conversation with a little quote I use sometimes about being true to yourself, family, friends, and God:

"The fault and deceit that you
bear in your heart,
Will never stay inside where it
first got its start

For sinew and blood
        are a thin veil of lace,
What you wear in your heart
        you wear on your face
If you play the game fair
        and you stand on first base
You don't have to say so,
        it shows in you face
But if your life is unselfish
        and for others you live,
Not how much you can get,
        but how much you can give,
And if you live close to God
        and his wonderful grace
You don't have to say so
        it shows on your face.

Loblolly staff who interviewed Bob Beaty - Seated, Ashley Wilkerson, and standing, Danny Weems and Mark Johnson.

Crew of # 276 "Old Crackerty" Front L to R - Lt. Harry Zembal (Nav), Lt. WK Sipes (Flt Eng), Maj. PA Koeing (Piolet), Lt. Jack Barnes (Co Piolet), Lt. Harry Polansky (Bombadier). Back L to R - Sgt. Louis Di Laurenzio (L Gunner), Sgt. Joe T. Yafos (TAil Gun), Sgt. Robert Lovelace (R Gunner), Sgt. Bob Beaty (Sr. Gunner), Sgt. John Sabanosh (Crew Chief), T/Sgt. John McKain (Radio Op.).

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JACK BOWEN

Jack Bowen

Jack Bowen was one of the many East Texans who went off to war with the 8th Air Force. He went to England as a member of the ground crew trained to keep the bombers in the air. But when the opportunity came, Jack Bowen switched to flying status as a gunner on a B-17. This love of flying led him in to a time of adventure and horror that he never believed possible. However, he did survive to go on to a career in the Air Force after World War II, and finally he returned to Panola County with his wife, Lucille. They now have five grown children and a growing number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

I was born in Texarkana, Texas, on July 19, 1923. I later moved to Carthage when my father took a job for Texaco. I attended Carthage school until 1941.

I entered the service on July 9, 1941, ten days prior to my 18th birthday. I joined the U.S. Army Air Corps., and completed basic training at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, Missouri. I was transferred to Lowery Field to attend armament school in August, 1941. After armament school, I was sent to McClellan Field in Sacramento, California and was assigned to the 2nd Air Depot Group. While I was stationed there, on December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and the United States was at war with Japan and Germany.

My group was shipped out to Oakland, California, where we were issued clothing and equipment for the South Pacific. Then our orders were changed, and we were shipped to Fort Hamilton, New York. We were processed there, and on April 15, 1942, we boarded the English ship *Cathy*, and set off for England. It took approximately 15 days to cross the Atlantic. The length of time due to the German submarines operating in the North Atlantic. We arrived in England around the first of May, 1942.

We took control of Molesworth air base from the Royal Air Force and prepared it for more of the American Army Air Corps, to arrive. The first American bombing of Germany took off from Molesworth on July 4, 1942. The bombers were A-20's, Boston Havoes, twin engine planes.

I later was transferred to a village called Poynton, near Manchester, where we set up depot. After serving there, I applied for and got a transfer to the Army Air Corps gunnery school. As I had already attended the armament school, the gunnery school was relatively easy. After I completed the school, I was assigned to the 91st Bomb Group, 401st Bomb Squadron, at Bassingbourn, England. I started flying missions with the crew of Lt. Paicatini on the B-17 bomber "Dearly Beloved." I flew the last three missions with the crew of "Rambling Wreck" and "Lightning Strikes." On the next to last mission, I flew on "Rambling Wreck." We were shot up pretty badly, and the plane had to go in for repairs. The crew of "Rambling Wreck" was assigned to fly "Lightning Strikes," a B-17, on February 21, 1944.

Jack Bowen's B-17

The crew of "Rambling Wreck"
Top row-Bill Shea, Navigator; Wendy Quattle Baum, Bombardier; Bill Gibbons, Pilot; Clyde Mc Callums, Co-Pilot
Front row -Bill Douponce, Radio Operator ; Julius Edwards and Jack Bowen, Waist Gunners; Paul Goecke, Tail Gunner; Clarence Bateman, Ball Turret; John Parsons, Top Turret

We were supposed to stand down on February 21, 1944, but at this time, every day was "a maximum effort day." So at about 4:00 am on the 21st, the Charge of Quarters came in our bay of the barracks and woke the crew up. He said that due to the fact "Rambling

Wreck" was in the hanger for repairs, we were going to take "Lightning Strikes" instead.

I got up and washed and shaved. Then I went to the flight line and got my equipment (parachute, flying boots, ect.). Next, I went to the mess hall to eat. After eating I returned to the flight line and got our .50 caliber machine guns at the armament section. I went to the aircraft and installed the guns and checked the ammunition for bent or short rounds. When this was completed we went to the briefing for the mission.

At the briefing, which was held in a room that was large enough to accommodate the crew members, on the front of the room was a very large map covered with a cloth curtain. When all the crew was seated, the briefing officer would remove the cover. At this time he would show us our target and route us to the target. On this particular day the target was an aircraft assembly plant near the town of Gutersloh. We all assumed this would be, for a change, an easy mission. It was a short miles mission. The briefing officer said there would only be a small amount of antiaircraft fire, and probably not too many enemy fighters.

So needless to say, we were happy. We boarded the aircraft and prepared to take off. All the B-17's would taxi out to the departure runway. At the time of take off, the control tower would fire a green flare. After that, all of the aircraft would take off at intervals (of seconds), until we were all airborne. After becoming airborne, it took us a length of time to climb the altitude and get into formation. After we were all in formation, we departed for the English Channel. At this time we began our checkouts. The copilot checked everyone on the intercom to insure communications were functioning. Once we reached the Channel, we loaded our ammunition belt and were given the order to test fire our weapons.

When all the checks were made we awaited the arrival of the coast of Europe, for we knew once we crossed it, we could expect antiaircraft fire and possible enemy fighters. We did well all the way to the Initial Point (IP). Once we were lined up on the IP targe, we started to receive anti-aircraft fire. It was a lot worse than the briefing officer had forecast. As we nearly got to the target, the lead aircraft navigator decided we weren't lined up properly. So he did, and we followed, a 180 degree turn over the target. In doing so, he swung too wide, causing the group, the high composite group, to scatter and spread out. We did not have a tight formation. This was about the time the German fighters, that were above us and hidden by the sun made their attack. They made a pass through our group. There were FW 190's and ME 109's.

We lost two aircraft. "Miss Quachita" and "My Beloved Too" were hit and crashed or exploded. Two of the "Miss Quachita" crew were killed, the co-pilot and the flight engineer. Three on "My Beloved Too" were also killed. This was the crew I was to have flown with, but I was changed to Lt. Gibbons crew just before takeoff.

The second pass of the FW 190's got "Miss Minookie" and "Lightning Strikes", the aircraft I was flying on as a waist gunner. Four men died on "Miss Minookie". "Lightning Strikes" was hit by 88 millimeter anti-aircraft fire and by the FW 190's and their 20 millimeter cannons. Two crew members were wounded. The plane caught fire after the FW190 attacks. We believe we shot down four of their fighters. Fire in the aircraft and the engines caused the crew to bail out at 18,000 feet. All the crew members bailed out safely. The pilot, William Gibbons, stayed with the aircraft until the entire crew had bailed out. Just after he bailed out, the plane exploded and parts landed near Herford, Germany.

After being shot down, I was injured rather badly. I had a broken bone in my left ankle and a severe back injury. I tried to get up after I landed by parachute, but I had taken a bad blow to the head and didn't know my ankle was broken. I was captured immediately by civilians and a Gestapo agent who raved and ranted in German, none of which I understood. I knew by sign language he was telling me to stand up. I would try but then would fall back down. I thought he was going to shoot me. Later, the radio operator, who was also captured, came and helped me to my feet. Then the Gestapo agent got out a camera to take our photos. I made the mistake of smiling when he took the photo, and paid dearly for it. That taught me, and the next photo he took I did not smile.

We were joined by other men who were captured, placed in a truck, and taken to some town. I think it was Munster. One crew member and I were taken to a very old building and taken downstairs to what I would call an old time dungeon. I had visions of men with long grey beards in there. When were placed together in a cell, we both began laughing. I guess we were both just letting off steam. All I said was, "Man, we are in a hell of a mess."

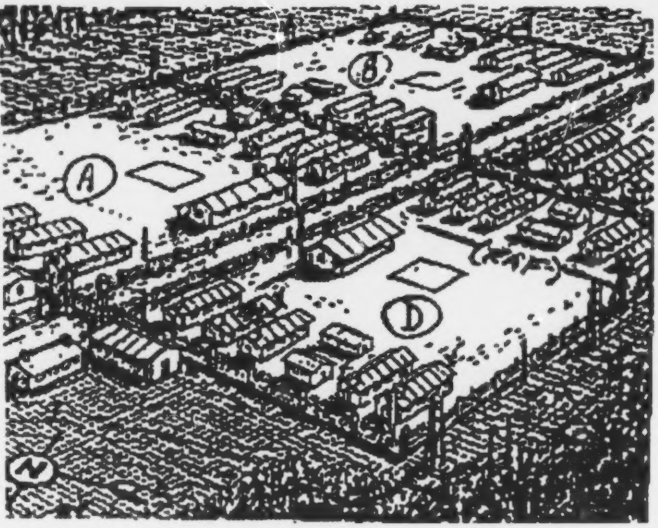
In about two days we were taken from the cell and shipped by truck to Frankfurt or Dulag Luft (an air force interrogation unit), and placed in another cell. It was big enough for two men, but there were about 15 men in there. We barely had room to stand. I think we were together in that cell for about 24 hours, at which time we were taken to interrogation, one at a time.

I was escorted to the interrogation room by guards. In this room, surrounded by books like a librarian, sat this officer, sharp as a tack and all smiles. He got up, told me to sit, and then from his desk he took a pack of cigarettes and gave me one. After he returned to his chair, he began by saying all he wanted to do was ask me a few questions.

The usual questions were: What year were you born, rank, name, etc. Then he began to ask where I was stationed, where was the aircraft I was on, name of my commanding officer, etc. I gave him my name, rank, and serial number. Then he suddenly got very irritated and began gettind hard nosed. Both the guards were behind and on each side of the chair where I sat. After a few more questions, one of them hit me and knocked me out of the chair. This continued for awhile, then the officer told me he knew all bout me and my group.

He removed a book from the shelf behind where he was sitting, opened it, and told me the name of the base where I was stationed, name of the base commander, etc. Then he said all he wanted me to do was verify some facts. He said it was OK if I told him for there was a man next door who had already told him. He then told the guard to open the door so I could hear the other man being interviewed. I never saw the man, only heard questions and answers from someone, probably another interrogater. After I refused to answer, he had me placed in solitary; no lights, no window, and a slot under the door where bread and water was passed to me for several days. I'm not sure how long it was then after that a guard came and took me to where other airmen were. Then about 10-12 of us were marched to the train station.

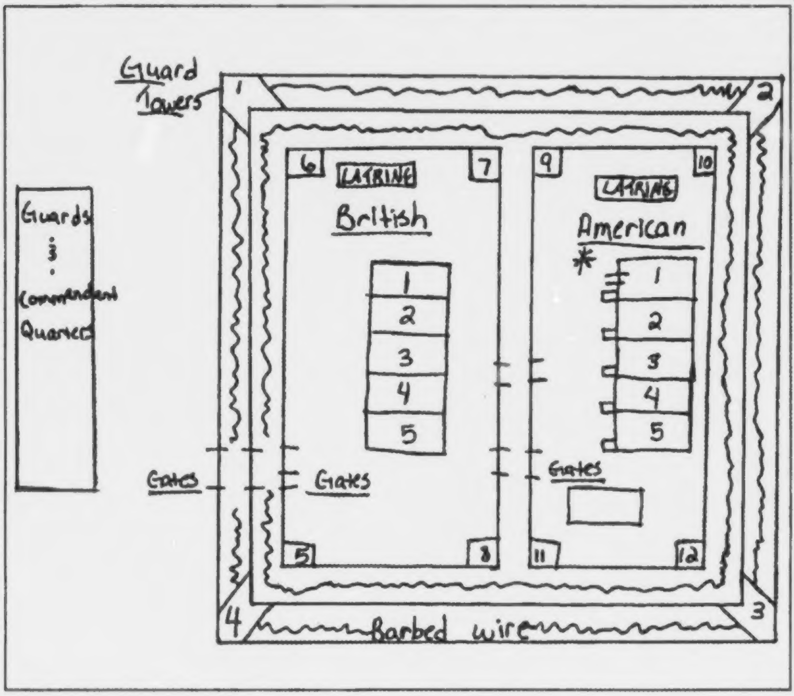
We were marched through part of Frankfurt, and it was bombed out rather badly. The civilians certainly didn't like us. They stared and spat on the airmen. I can't say that I blame them. I probably would have done the same if someone had bombed my home. War is really a terrible thing. The only thing I could think of was how they had bombed England, Poland, France and other countries. We made it to the train station and met some more American air crewmen. The train station had about 12 departing tracks. One of the new crewmen said there were eight airmen hanged about five tracks from where we were about this time.



STALAG LUFT IV

It was night, and the air raid sirens began sounding the RAF was on a mission, and one of their targets was Frankfurt. The guards rushed us into an air raid shelter, and we could hear the bombs exploding outside. After the raid we were taken back to the train. I didn't know if we were going to make it or not as the civilians were really getting worked up and trying to get at us. The guards finally got us on the train, and we pulled out. We were lucky to get out alive.

Our next stop was Berlin. We arrived in the marshaling yards, again at night, and again the RAF was out. The guards locked the doors of the box cars we were in, and left us out in the middle of the raid. Bombs fell all around us. I don't know to this day how we avoided being hit. When daylight came, we looked out through the only little window, about 16" by 8" with barbed wire on it, all we saw was devastation. Everything around us was destroyed. The Germans brought slave laborers and had the tracks fixed in a short time. The guards returned, and we were on our way again.



The box car we left Frankfurt in was what was known as a "40 by 8", meaning it could carry 40 men and 8 horses. It was a carry over from World War I. There were no sanitary facilities. After five days in there, it became almost unbearable. There was not enough room for all to sit or lay down, so we had to take turns. We had one or two meals during this time, if you wish to call it that. It was some watery soup made from barley, but at this time it was very welcome. I still have a phobia about not eating everything on my plate. Once you've been starved, you appreciate what food you have more.

We finally arrived in Memmel, located in Lithuania. We were taken off the train and marched to a P.O.W. Camp at a place called Heydrug, or Stalag Luft VI. The date was about March 1, 1944. We were photograped and issued

P.O.W. numbers (mine was PW1577). Then we were placed in some dark barracks, if you can call them that. We had no electricity or any other type facilities, except a gas drum that had been cut in half and placed in a cubicle. That was used at night, two men had to take it and dump it out in the morning. The camp was laid out as shown on page 51.

Due to the proximity of the latrine to the fence, I was involved in digging a tunnel, by crawling in the the toilet hole and digging with others. The tu;nnel was found by the guards before we got to the fence. Other attempts were made but met with failure. Later, after "The Great Escape" by the British in which 50 RAF members were caught and executed, the Gestapo issued orders that for every man that escaped, ten men remaining behind would be executed. This was posted in all barracks.

I stayed at Stalag Luft VI until about July 15, 1944. The Russians were advancing and had cut off evacuations by land by the Germans. We were taken back to Menneland loaded on two ships.

This part is on the prison camp experiences by Jack Bowen and John Parsons.

Gydekrug Run

In July 1944, Russian armour had broken through the German lines southwest of Leningrad and was hurrying Through Estonia toward Lithuaniea. Stalag Luft VI lay directly in the path of the Russian advance. The German authorities decided to evacuate the camp.

July 14, 1944, was a very beautiful summer day which was soon spoiled by orders from the German *Kommandatur* to prepare to move out. The prisoners in D Lager were to leave ahead of those in A and E Lagers.

Shortly after noon, the prisoners hoisted their homemade packs. Urged on by shouts of "Raus," they shambled off to a railroad siding where they were to be loaded into box cars, the famous "40 Hommes 8 Chevaux" (40 men and 8 horses) of World War I. A short journey eventually brought us to the port of Memmel.

Convinced by shouting, gesticulating guards, the prisoners climbed aboard the collier *S.S. Insterburg*, a most unprepossessing, rusty old tramp that had plied the Baltic for many a long year. When the men reached the head of the gangplank, they saw the prisoners ahead of them disappearing down a hatchway. Some, in the confusion, managed, in spite of the guards, to slip away and hide among the deck cargo. However, it was only temporary as bayonets soon rousted them out and convinced them to join the others. A steel ladder led down to the coal bunkers thirty feet below. The bunkers were cold, dark and damp. A terrible smell of old bilge poisoned the air.

As they arrived at the bottom, the men arranged themselves on the steel plates, but it soon became crowded. Shouts of "no more men, it is too crowded" were ignored, as more and more men were forced down until every inch of space was occupied. Some even climbed up onto the propeller shaft housing. More men continued to descend and, for them, accommodations were made by each man sitting between another man's legs. There was no room to lie down. Sanitary arrangements consisted of a bucket. If the bucket was full, some were allowed on deck one at a time to relieve themselves in the scuppers. At the hatch, armed guards with Schmeissers and steam hoses watched over the wretched below.

After the first night, some of the men began to get sick from the foul odor, and since there was no spare room, they simply vomtied all over themselves and their companions. Conditions such as this tend to draw men together, and it was a touching sight to see a dirty, unshaven sergeant wiping the face of a vomit-covered airman, or holding his head while his stomach heaved. Throughout the long days and nights, each man tried to bolster the others.

One airman, apparently overcome by claustrophobia, started screaming and ran up the stairs toward the guards, It rather took the guards by surprise as the airman was able to get past them, get up onto the deck and jump overboard. The guards immediately shot him as he swam about in the water.

Rumors of a mutiny to take over the ship and sail it to Sweden were soon squelched by saner heads who had noticed, when on deck, that the Insterburg was accompanied by a torpedo boat. A detailed description of the E boat by one of the fortunate ones who had seen it was listened to eagerly, as many had never seen a torpedo boat.

Each man tried to stifle his thoughts of Russian submarines as the ship made her way down the coast of the Gulf of Danzig past Frische Nehrung, north to round the caps at the head of the Gulf, and then due West.

While the Insterburg drove forward at a steady seven or eight knots, the main drive shaft made a noticeable thum-thump, which was perfectly audible for miles and could be heard by any submarine in the vicinity. Some of the airmen had been members of aircraft which had sowed mines in the Baltic, and pictures of the ugly horns on the mines haunted their imaginations.

Each noise transmitted through the plates made them wonder if a mine was scraping the hull.

After three long days and nights, the *Insterburg* approached the harbor at Swinemunde. Egged on by the familiar "Raus, Raus" of the guards, the prisoners climbed the ladder to fresh air and sunshine. They savored these as they moved off the ship. The boat was docked amidst row upon row of German submarines. We walked over to a long line of "Side Car Pullmans". These rail cars had been altered somewhat and were divided in half at the doors by a wire mesh. One side of the car held fifty to sixty "Hommes," and the other half held one lone guard armed with an automatic weapon.

The men's boots and shoes were taken as they climbed into the half car set aside for their exclusive use. Again, it was very crowded, but the men had learned to cope. Just as loading was completed, the air raid sirens started their high-pitched sound, and the guards wisely scrambled out of the cars and looked for a hiding place. Batteries of anti-aircraft guns set up a dreadful noise just behind the rail yards. As each battery fired, the freight car would give a little jump. None of this contributed to the prisoner's peace of mind as the guards thoughtfully locked the cars before seeking shelter.

Over the sound of the anti-aircraft guns, the shell bursts, the continued wailing of the sirens and the beat of the aircraft engines could be heard the rising scream of falling bombs, followed shortly by explosions. Fortunately, the raid seemed to be a small diversion by the United States Air Force, and the dock area was not hit. The raid hastened the final loading. The guards quickly climbed aboard, the doors were shut, the locomotives hooked on and, jerking and lurching, the train moved out.

All the prisoners wondered, "Where to now?" The future looked bleak and uncertain.

The train made its way slowly east and south from Swinemunde, and some twenty-four hours of travel brought it to its destination at an obscure siding.

The prisoners were shackled in twos, hand and foot. Amid much shouting by the guards and barking and snarling by the guard dogs, the airmen vacated the freight cars. A vague uneasiness gripped the men when the volume of shouting and barking rose to new heights. When they turned the corner around the station, their worst fears were realized. Commanded and egged on by a seeming madman, the guards urged the prisoners into a shambling run up a hill through a forest. As the guards became more excited, they resorted to bayonet stabs, rifle butts and dog bites to increase the pace. I was stabbed by the bayonets. Possessions were discarded as the run quickened. Men began to fall by the wayside where they were beaten and bayoneted as they lay. The dogs, excited by their handlers, ripped and tore at the wounded and exhausted airmen.

Freeman and I were shackled together. At one point, he took a bad fall and pulled me down with him. It was difficult to get back on our feet without being overrun by dogs, men, and guards.

Freeman kept saying that he couldn't make it, so I dragged and carried him along the way. He kept saying,"Jack, were're going to die, we're both going to die." Over and over he repeated this.

Many acts of courage were enacted in the midst of the confusion. All along, men shouted encouragement to each other and warnings against attempts to fall out into the woods to try and escape. Some had noticed machine gunners stationed in the woods on either side of the road. They were just waiting to cut down any would be escapees. Other exhausted men were being assisted as I was assisting Bateman. The stronger of the prisoners moved to the outside of the column in order to protect the injured and weaker men in the center.

Finally, after an uphill run of some three kilometers, the weary men arrived at a field outside the barbed wire of a prison camp. Many of us thought we were being run up the hill to our deaths, and we were relieved to find a camp at the top of the hill.

As the men lay exhausted on the grass, the medical officer moved among them to treat the bayonet wounds and dog bites. The padre also comforted the wounded. Neither water, food nor medication was forthcoming. One guard kept pumping water from a well and letting it run out on the ground. The prisoners were trying to show a bravado that might hide their actual fear and they were laughing at the situation that we were in. This angered the guards. They started screaming and shouting in German and proceeded to carry in the critically injured and dying prisoners. The men had been badly bayoneted and bitten by the dogs. They laid the men amongst us and said, "Now laugh, now laugh." Everyone was very quiet while the guards laughed. That night, we slept where we had fallen.

The following day we were supplied with several tents and drinking water, but no food. On the third day, the men were to enter the camp, but this was not the end of their trials. To enter the camp, they had to run in single file through a gauntlet of twenty young Kriegsmarine, who bayoneted them again and belted them with rifle butts as they ran through the gate. Once inside the gate, a vigorous strip search was made of each individual, accompanied by beatings and confiscation of all personal belongings. Most of our clothing was also taken, and many arrived in the main camp wearing only a pair of undershorts. Finally, we received a bowl of watery soup, our first meal since leaving Swinemunde.

HERE JACK BOWEN CONCLUDED HIS INTERVIEW.

Somehow we survived. We stayed in that camp, Stalag Luft IV, from July, 1944 until February 4, 1945. Then the Russians started coming close again moving from the East toward Berlin. Then from February 4 to May 8, 1945 we were constantly on the road. One fellow kept track of the miles we walked and it was over 1,000 miles. We slept in the snow, had filthy clothes, no shoes and wrapping our feet in rags. People lost one or both legs. It was a death march. We lost 300-400 men out of 1,200 from that one camp.

On February 4, 1945, we evacuated Luft IV. We force marched in the midst of one of the worst winters there in many years in North Germany. The suffering by frostbite was pitiful. Guys lost toes, feet, their legs, We all had dysentery, diarrhea. We had a flight surgeon that had bailed out over Germany in order to get into a P.O.W. camp to try to take care of the prisoners. He was with us but couldn"t get any medication. He would have us take wood when the Germans would let us, and burn it. We would eat charcoal to try to stop the dysentery and diarrhea, but you couldn't stop it. The only water you drank was polluted water. When you drank water, it was out of trenches, or you'd eat ice or snow. You had to drink even if there was nothing to eat. You can't live without water. We drank out of everthing, so we caught every disease in the world. We were fortunate to keep alive.

So we kept wandering. The doctor had gotten some cigarette paper and kept a record of our travels. He later gave evidence to the War Crimes Commission. He kept a daily log as we went from one place to the next. It was really 980 something miles and in the shape we were in, that's a long way to walk. We walked from February 4 until May 8, 1945, when the war was officially over. We had no permanent camp. We were sleeping in ditches, sleeping in fields, wherever we stopped for the night. If we were lucky, we would sleep in a barren field.

Q - What were the conditions on this march as regards drinking water?

A - It was common for the men to eat snow whether it was dirty or not. At other times some men drank from ditches that others had used as latrines. I personally protested this condition many times.

Q - What medical facilities were available on the march from Stalag #4?

A - Blisters became infected and many men collapsed from hunger. Wherever our column went, there was a trail of bloody movements and discarded underwear.

In May we saw lots of explosions from shells one night. About midnight or one o'clock in the morning, it all quit. Everything got dead quiet. We were right in between the two opposing sides. They were each firing over us. When it got quiet, we knew something was up. The next morning we woke up and started looking around, The only guards that were left were the ones who had been half-way decent to us. The ones who had been cruel had left. They were long gone.

We looked up on a hill and saw a half-track coming. There were troops on the top of it, and they were flying the Union Jack (English flag). We knew we were finally free. They came in and issued each one of us a rifle and a double bandoleer of ammunition. We were supposed to go back across the line 50 miles to a place called Luneburg. I was crippled up and so were a lot of others. We commandeered wagons, oxen, horses, bicycles to get us to Luneburg. The rifles were to protect us because there were still a lot of snipers around.

We'd come into a town from one side, and the citizens would leave from the other side. We did look pretty bad. You can imagine what we looked like carrying rifles, with bandoleers across our chests, with long beards, not too clean. We finally got back to Luneburg. We were actually liberated by the British at Zarrentin. That was just across the Elbe River.

When we were liberated, we looked and saw a whole German division trying to get across the Elbe River. The British had it blocked off. The Germans were trying to get away from the Russians. They were scared to death of the Russians. The way they had treated them, they knew what the Russians would do to them. The Germans got to jumping into the river to get across, and it was big, wide, and cold.

There were Russian P.O.W.'s who were liberated with us. They were given rifles as well, but they had to take those rifles away from them. They were killing German civilians - men, women, and children. They were raping women and little girls. The British finally took the rifles back and put them all under arrest. They just went crazy. I thought there was going to be another war right there.

So we got back to Lune burg. There was a grass field there with airplanes going in and out, for example-P.O.W.'s and others. We almost had an international incident when we got there. There were about 700 of us, P.O.W.'s, and we hadn't eaten a real meal in a month. The British wouldn't share their supper or give us anything to eat. I figured they could do without one meal. If it hadn't been for their colonel, I think there would have been a fight. We were getting ready to fight, and he came in and gave a long speech about cooperating and quieted people down. So we spent the night there sleeping on the grass. The next morning the airplanes came in. They flew us out. I went into Brussels, Belgium, and I was in a hospital there for a week or ten days. From there I went to Camp Lucky Strike (in France) and then got to New York. I was at Camp Kilmer for a week or so.

Then they sent me on down to San Antonio. In fact, they sent 350 of us there. They placed us on convalescent leave. It was probably in June, 1945, before we got to San Antonio and got released. We went back to Miami Beach and that's where I was separated before I re-enlisted. I went back in, finally retired from the Air Force. I retired as a Master Sergeant in 1958. I got a disability retirement because of World War II injuries.

From my World War II service I was awarded the Air Medal. I received a French medal for the liberation of France. I received the Prisoner of War Medal. Then I received several campaign medals for the time I was in and when I served.

The B-17 bomber was the best plane ever made for the job it had to do. It could take a heck of a beating. The day before I was shot down - on the "Rambling Wreck", we had a stabilizer shot off, lost two engines, had to crank the landing gear down by hand - and we made it back to the base. The damage was from flak and fighter attack. I thought we were going down that day. We were lucky to get back. I've seen the B-17's come in with whole sections gone. One got rammed by a German Fighter right forward of the vertical stabilizer, and the plane held together. I think it was the best made for that time. They set it up so they could fly the daylight missions without fighter escort and still survive. The B-17's had to depend on each other. To me the German fighters were the big problem. You could drop the foil to fool the radar - directed anti-aircraft guns and their flack.

We had the firepower on the B-17's to survive even the German fighters. The German fighter's guns were good up to 600 yards and ours were for 1,000. So we had 400 yards to get them before they got inside their range. We had our guns sighted to take advantage of our longer range. To go for their fighters wasn't like shooting clay pigeons. Those suckers moved and flew by us with their armor protected bellies showing. But we got armor piercing and incendiary shells and when we hit them, it would go through their armor and set the planes on fire. We gave them a good battle.

The day we got shot down, we got jumped by the fighters after we got out of the formation. When we saw we weren't going to make it, the pilot lowered the landing gear. That was an international sign of distress. Most air forces recognized this. Just as soon as we dropped out our gear - there were two German fighters coming up and they came up along side us and boxed us in.

They tipped their wings in a salute and took off. Of course, they radioed our position to the ground so they were ready to capture us when we got down.

The Luftwaffe (German Air Force) had a lot of respect for us; they weren't Gestapo, SS types. I didn't meet those types until I was a P.O.W. In fact I was captured when I couldn't walk. I was sitting with another P.O.W. who had been burned. He had newspaper to cover him. His eyebrows were gone as were his nose and ears and he just had a scar for a month. He was really in pain. This Luftwaffe Officer came through and spoke to us. He spoke pretty good English. He sat down and gave us a cigarette. He outranked the guards. I don't know what he told them. I couldn't understand German much then. Whatever he told them, they got off our back. He gave us cigarettes (four of us). What I am saying, there was an understanding between opposing sides at times.

The SS and the Gestapo gave us the hard times as P.O.W.'s. They were mean. The young Germans were often fanatics and were tough too. I was interviewed after the war as to some of their atrocities by the War Crimes Commission. A lot of the information was for the Russians, for a lot of the crimes I saw took place in areas they came to control. They also asked me what I thought of the Russians. There were some of their P.O.W.'s with us and you had to watch your food when they were around. Normally P.O.W.'s would never steal from each other. That was a cardinal sin. In fact, we had one guy in a camp I was in who stole somebody's bread. He was obtracized, nobody ever spoke to the man again. You couldn't allow stealing, for people's lives depended on what little bit they had.

These Russians were bad about that. You had to hide any food you had inside your clothes. They'd steal what they could. I told the War Crimes investigators this, but they had good people too. One time another fellow and I had been really sick. There were a bunch of Russians who had been working on a farm. They saw us and took us into a little shack, and they fed us and quite a few others in our group. I told this story of Russian kindness to the investigator but he wasn't too interested to hear anything positive. I told him he'd have to hear the good as well.

I know the allies tried to get the Germans who abused the P.O.W.'s, but I don't know what happened. I know they were after Capt. Pickhardt who was responsible for the atrocities when we were going to Stalag Luft IV. He was the commandant and hated Americans. He was S.S. He was on the War Crimes Commission's list to go on trial, but I don't know if they ever found him.

A DAY IN PRISON CAMP AND P.O.W. MEMORIES

About 6 o'clock every afternoon, the Germans would come in and lock the doors to your quarters, to each barrack. Now in Luft VI the barracks were built on the ground. But in Luft IV, more typically, the barracks were built up off the ground. In that way the Germans could look to see if anyone was hiding there.

Anyway, they would come in and lock the doors, and then they would turn the guard dogs loose in the compound, within the barbed wire areas and among the barracks. They also had guards walking in the compounds at night. Those were big old dogs, so if you got out of the barracks they would eat you up.

Our beds consisted of what we call excelsior, like a tow sack filled with wood shavings. You had five slats to lay that tow sack mattress on. It was lumpy and the cots were triple deck. The cots were attached to the walls around the room in the barracks, with space on one wall for the door. We had over thirty men in each room, living, sleeping, and eating.

Then in the morning, they would come around and unlock the doors. They would get the dogs out of the compound. They'd open the doors before daylight. They had a toilet thing down at the end of the room. It was like a tin bucket that had to be emptied everyday. During the day we would go down to what was called the "waste house".

We could not actually leave the barracks until it got light. Then we could go down to where there was a long trough with faucets and we'd wash and get cleaned up some. We didn't have razors at that time. I had a pretty good size beard. Most people did have beards. We had what we called two meals a day. In the morning, I guess it would be about nine o'clock, after everybody got up and got everything taken care of, people would be up and moving around. We had what was called a mess hall which was up at the top of the "lager' or compound. We had about a three gallon bucket that we used for "ersatz". This was coffee made from acorns.

For breakfast we had the "ersatz" and a ration of bread. We got a loaf of bread for seven men for a week. That's how much bread there was. Now if you take a typical loaf of bread, you'd have to cut it seven ways. Each piece would have to last for a week. So you could see why it was imperative that nobody could steal from a fellow prisoner.

Then they would give us what they called "swine potatoes", which were small potatoes like they fed the hogs. They would boil them. That would usually be our second meal of the day - "ersatz" coffee and boiled potatoes. Sometimes we would have a vegetable which was like a cross between a pine cone and a turnip or a cabbage or something. It was horrible but at least it was life sustaining. We didn't have any meat.

Believe me, it was quite a problem in serving the food. You'd go up there to the mess hall to get your food. And then you had to have a room leader, which I was from my particular room, who had to sit there and divide to each man in that room exactly what he was supposed to get. And they all would sit there and watch you to be sure nobody got an ounce more than they got. So what I finally wound up doing, with so much complaining, was to make a policy that each would have a turn to pass out the food. So if there was any griping, it was done at each other and not just at me. That is the way we split our food. So one person went down to the central place to get the food and bring it back to their room in the barracks, and then it would be divided up.

Each barrack had a leader, and then there was one for each of the six rooms in the barracks. The barracks leader would send one man from each of the rooms to the mess hall. He'd go get the food and give it to the room leaders, and he would see that the food was divided among the men in the room.

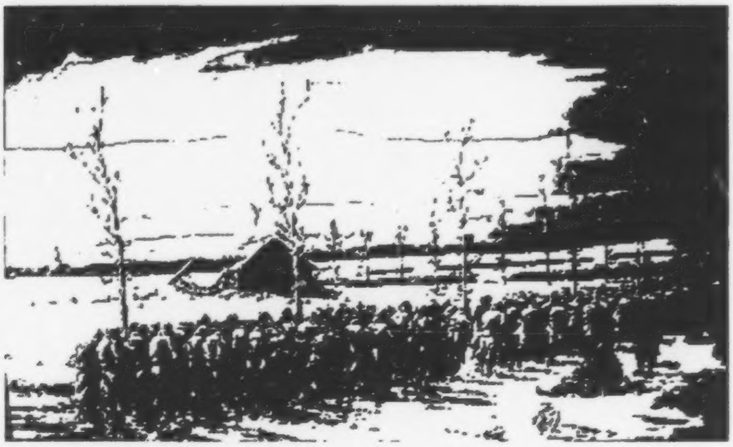
I guess when I was a prisoner, for over a year, we got Red Cross parcels two or three times. People had the mistaken idea we got them pretty often. When the war was over, they found barns full of our Red Cross parcels that the Germans never distributed. They'd give them to their own people. They were starving to death, too. I guess I'd have done the same thing.

We passed the time by creating our own ways of entertainment. We made wooden chess boards, wooden checkers, anything we could cut up out of tin. Of course the Germans got most of the tin we had. Cans went to the war effort. We were supposed to turn it in but we'd hide it, anything to frustrate the Germans. We would think up things. In fact we made up cards out of paper and board. I learned how to play bridge while I was there. You had to be innovative. You couldn't just sit there and vegetate. We had a lot of group discussions and a lot of fights. You live together for a while and fights will happen. That and walking was about it.

Non-commissioned officers (sergeants) were not required to work. If you had been required to work, you'd be better off with better rations. Army P.O.W.'s below the rank of sergeant were like that. All air crew members were sergeants or above. There were no privates flying, but I think you would have been better working on a farm as a private, for you ate better. Many of the Army P.O.W.'s were in pretty good shape when they were released.

But when you are confined a long time, with not a lot to do, you could go crazy. I was in with a British P.O.W. who was there for six years. He was captured the first day of the war in 1939. He just about lost all his marbles. We got a piece of cardboard and made a medal and made a presentation to him on his sixth year. He was pretty flaky, and was mentally pretty unstable by then. I could see why. I wasn't there that long but could have ended up like him. That came from being bored with nothing to do.

We were hungry, too, and there was a lot of sickness. We had lice and a little bit of everything else. We had dysentery, a lot of diarrhea. You had to be very careful. We were very fortunate that we had all been inoculated before. We would have died from just typhus if we hadn't had the shots. All the lice carried typhus.



As bad as we had it, the Germans treated the Russian P.O.W.'s worse than animals. They had them pulling wagons like beasts. They were in the same camp but in their own areas. The Germans wouldn't let them mingle with us as we could with the British. The Russians did all the manual labor like cleaning out the toilets with what we called "the honey wagon". They took all that stuff out and it was used to fertilize the crops. In Europe they still used that stuff.

When we were in Stalag Luft VI, we had a German commander who was as anti-Nazi really. He was a pretty decent sort of a man. Had they even known what he did, they would have probably shot him. He treated us pretty fairly and would listen to our complaints and do what he could to make things better.

Once we got down to Stalag Luft IV it got pretty rough. Most of the guards there were ex - front line soldiers or SS or Gestapo types. Life got bad in that second camp and stayed that way to the end of the war. They'd haul out in the middle of the night. They'd wake you up at two in the morning and get you outside for a head count. There might be snow up to your rear end, but you still fell out. They'd just knock you out of the beds.

Up to the Spring of 1944, most of the German P.O.W. camps had been run by the military, and treatment wasn't too bad. Then there was a big escape from another camp. Then things did change. Hitler issued orders on this, close to the end of the war. He wanted all the P.O.W.'s killed. We heard of this and armed ourselves with weapons we made ourselves from beds and such. We made clubs to fight with if they had come in after us and some would survive.

Treatment finally started to get a little better in late April, early May, 1945, with the ending of the war. The cruel guards took off. The ones who treated us fairly well were the ones to stay. The bad ones knew what would happen to them if we could get a hold of them. So when we were liberated, most of them were gone.

RECIEVING PURPLE HEART

The worst of the guards was known as "Big Stoop." They caught him, and he got a pitchfork right between the eyes. Americans did that. They got him plus another one known as "Iron Cross." I know "Iron Cross" killed four Americans. He walked up to them and shot them in the camp. He was later killed by Americans who had been prisoners. They caught "Big Stoop" at a farm. He'd taken off, but they just ran across him later. He had hands as big as a ham. He could slap you across a room. I don't know how many got their ear drums ruptured from where he slapped them on the side of the head.

Another thing happened in East Prussia at Heydekrug. They had these Russian P.O.W.'s giving the Germans a hard time. They wouldn't come out of their barracks so the Germans turned the guard dogs loose on them. The Russians wrapped their arms up in blankets and killed the dogs, and then ate them. The Russians were not a literate group, and they didn't know the meaning of fear.

But overall, the daily life in the camps was very monotonous. When you're confined so much in a small area, it's deadening. We had no movies or real entertainment. guys put on skits at a small theater type arrangement. But it ceased after we left there. In fact it ceased there before we left. There was a Catholic priest who took confessions, but an English speaking guard always listened in.

There were no organized sports. I never saw a softball or a volleyball as some P.O.W.'s saw. I know the officer's camps were better than those for the enlisted men. The Germans always respected rank. They were very rank conscious.

Escape attempts ceased after "The Great Escape" when a lot of British officers escaped. Hitler then had about fifty of them shot when they were recaptured. The Germans then put notices up in the P.O.W. camps saying that for each escapee, ten P.O.W.s left behind would be shot. The Germans had forgotten about the Geneva Convention when the SS and the Gestapo took over most Control of the the camps.

"The March" by Don Churchill shows how Jack Bowen is alive today because of the humanity of two men.

One is Lowell T. Birdwell, an army buddy who also made the death march. When Bowen fell in the snow, Birdwell ministered to his wounded companion until guards forced the stronger man to move on.

Bowen's other savior was a German army guard, a Pole conscripted by the German army after Germany occupied his homeland. The guard deserted to help Bowen. He found shelter, nursed the wounded man, and risked his own life repeatedly to steal food.

Last year, out of gratitude to Birdwell and the Polish guard, and as a tribute to prisoners of all wars, Bowen conceived the idea of recreating in an oil painting the moment of his fall. For the work, he commissioned artist Don Churchill, who commutes between a home in El Paso and one in the Rock Hill community.

The now-completed painting shows ranks of prisoners moving through snow as far as the eye can see. In the foreground is the figure of Bowen lying in the snow as Birdwell bends over him and supports his head. Standing nearby is the Polish guard who will soon desert. (See page 62)

Today, Birdwell is retired and lives in Longview. Bowen sees him often.

The guard's story is not so happy. After liberation by British troops, he made his way back to Poland, armed with a "safe passage" written in English by Bowen to protect him from arrest by British or American troops. Soon afterwards, the Iron Curtain fell over Poland, and Bowen was unable to locate his benefactor.

CLARENCE OTTERMAN

Clarence Otterman is the father of our elementary principal, Donna Porter. He was at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 when the Japanese attacked, and started World War II for America. He was assigned to the battleship, *U.S.S. Arizona*, at Pearl Harbor. The ship had a crew of 1400, and over 1200 were killed in the attack. This represented over half the Americans to die that day. Clarence Otterman went on to serve in the Military for 20 years, and then settled in East Texas where his wife had been born and grew up.

Q: When and where were you born?

A: I was born in Traer, Iowa on Oct. 17, 1919. We lived on a farm when I was first born, and later my family moved to the city. My Dad managed a Skelly gasoline station in Traer.

Q: Describe what it was like when you were growing up.

A: Although I grew up during the depression, my father always had steady employment. I would call it a normal, happy childhood except for the long illness of my mother and the loss of her when I was only 17 years old. We were luckier than most of the people. One of my favorite chores as a young boy was helping my uncle mow the graveyard. We used push mowers back then and got a lot of exercise. When I was in high school, my favorite subject was math. I loved all sports and was captain of our football team. I also participated in basketball and track. When I was a senior in high school, I got an athletic scholarship to a college, but I decided to join the Navy instead. I worked at a grocery store when I was in the 7th grade and made 50 cents a day. Coca-Cola was only 5 cents then.

Q: When and where did you join the Navy?

A: On October 4, 1939, I joined the Navy. I went to the Navy Training Station Office in Great Lakes, Illinois.

Q: Why did you join the Navy?

A: I had a friend that was in the Navy and I decided to join too.

Q: Where did you go to bootcamp?

A: Great Lakes, Illinois.

Q: Describe what bootcamp was like?

Clarence Otterman, center-and friends.

A: It was very strict! We had to have a short hair cut, be clean shaven and shoes shined. Rules were to obeyed and not broken.

Q: What were your assignments prior to reporting aboard the U.S.S. *Arizona*?

A: After bootcamp, I requested assignment on the *Arizona.* It was a battleship. I traveled cross-country by train to California where I then boarded the *Arizona*, my new home for the next two years. I started as a seaman 1st class, and then I went on to gunnery mates.

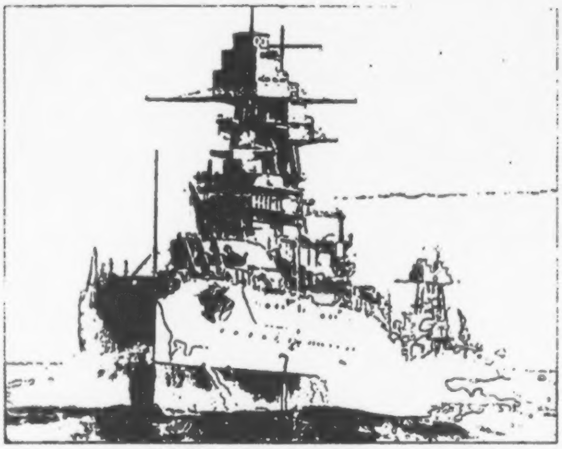
Q: Did you have any special interests?

A: I was on the Arizona's football team, and when we were in port we would play games. One happy memorable occasion was when the Arizona crossed the equator. The sailors that had never been across were called the polliwogs. After we were "initiated", we were called shellbacks. I was one. The ceremony was a long time Navy tradition to recognize sailors whom were getting to sail the seas.

Q: What were you doing before Pearl Harbor attacked?

A: The *Arizona* had just docked in Pearl Harbor a few days before the attack. I was cleaning up and getting the area ready for church services on the fantail of the *Arizona.* I looked up and saw planes flying. By a symbol on their wings, I recognized them as Japanese planes. At this time the bombs had already started falling. That was the biggest shock and surprise of life. Some of my buddies had shore leave the night before and were sleeping late. I ran down to the number four turret to wake them up and started yelling at them we were under attack. At first they didn't believe me, but finally did. We came back up on deck, and the ship was engulfed in flames.

A bomb had hit midsection, and the ship broke in two. It had blown apart in an instant. We were ordered to abandon ship. Many were already killed and trapped below. From midship all the way forward to the bow, the ship was on

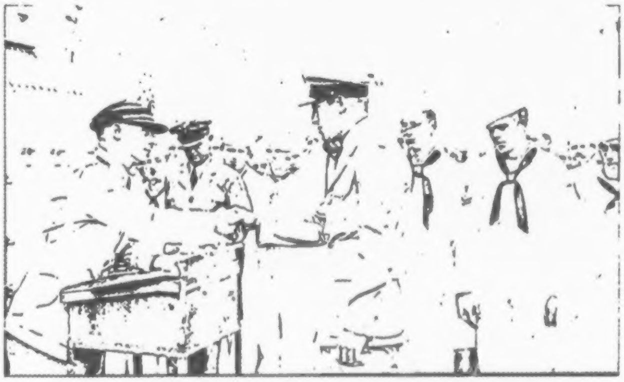


USS ARIZONA

fire. The water around the ship was on fire where oil had been spilled. After we abandoned ship, a friend and I got a motor launch at Ford Island and brought it back to pick up survivors into the boat, and one was so severely burned that his skin virtually slipped off. He died right after we got him to shore. We saved several, but many died in the burning water.

The friend that had talked me into joining the Navy was on the *U.S.S. Vestal* which had been tied up to the *Arizona*. They had managed to cast off before the *Arizona* was hit. I had no knowledge of what had happened to him until several months afterwards. He survived and had no knowledge of me either.

Clothes were issued, and we stayed at the naval base at Pearl Harbor. Three days after the bombing, we were assigned burial details. Long trenches were dug in the cemetery, "the Punch Bowl", and each body was laid in a row , head to foot. Sticks with their ID tags, when available , were placed by the grave. Later crosses were put at the head of each grave. Elsewhere in the cemetery we buried three Japanese pilots that had been shot down. Soon after that, I was assigned to The *U.S.S. Whitney* and patrolled the shores and coast of Pearl Harbor. After being on the *Whitney* for several months, I was sent back to Washington to gunnery school. I was then sent to Orange, Texas, where I joined the crew of a destroyer, the *U.S.S. Murray*, a ship which my future brother-in-law had helped to build at the shipyard there. I met and married my wife in Orange, too.



RECEIVING COMMENDATION
USS MURRAY

On the Murray, we went on a shakedown cruise to Cuba, and later went back into the Pacific where we were involved in most of the major battles. During one battle we were hit by a torpedo, but the ship survived. I received a

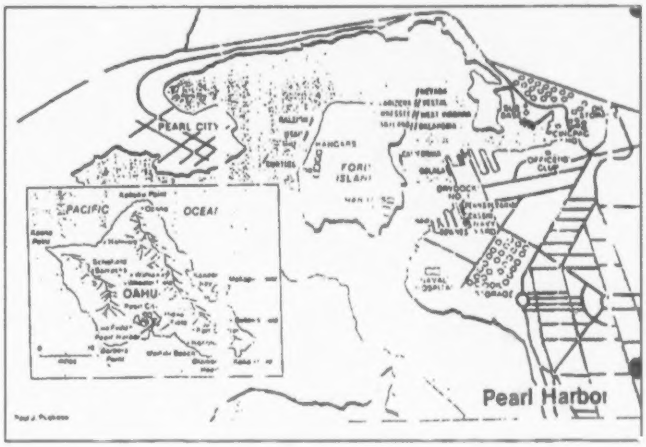
commendation for outstanding performance because of my actions during this time. The *Murray* was sent back to the States for repair then returned to the Pacific and the fighting. On another occasion, we boarded a Japanese hospital ship going back to the Japanese Islands to check and make sure only wounded were being transferred back to Japan. Then the war ended. While I was on the *Murray*, a Japanese submarine surfaced near our ship to surrender to us. I was one among 25 of the boarding party to check out. We stayed on the sub all night. Other American sailors came the next morning and took over command when they went to the Japanese harbor. Peace was declared, but orders were given "if" necessary, shoot the enemy down in a "friendly manner."

Q: What happened after the war?

A: I finished out my six years enlistment time and got out on the Navy. I was a civilian for two years then decided to go back. I wanted to go into the Navy, but I could not get my chief gunners mate rank back because the need was not there. However, the Army did offer me a good deal, so I went in the Army. I retired as a Sgt. Major after a total of 20 years in the service.

Q: After you retired what happened?

A: I settled in Texas and was hired as a policeman with the Center Texas Police Dept. I also worked for a major chicken plant in the area. After this, I went back into law enforcement and later held the position as Chief of Police of Center. After serving several years as chief, I decided to quit and take life easy, but was requested to take the position of City Judge of Center. I worked there approximately two years and re-



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signed. I was appointed to finish a term for the Justice of Peace at Precinct 2 at Shelbyville, Tx. After the term was over, I retired at my farm home in the Clever Creek Community where I now enjoy visits from my five wonderful daughters and their families. I was blessed to survive the *Arizona*. I have kept in contact with several of my buddies that were on the *Arizona* with me. It is not known how many of the 187 survivors are still living. But , I'm working on it, to catch up on their news.

Q: What advice can you give today's young people?

A: America is a wonderful place. Young people should take pride in America and always be ready to fight and protect our country. Don't get involved in drugs--get an education--and trust in the Lord. In conclusion, I have a lot to thank the Lord for and pray for a world of peace.

LOVIS PHILLIPS

THIS NEXT STORY DEPICTS A HOMETOWN BOY'S VIEW ON THE EFFECTS OF WORLD WAR II ON GARY. LOVIS PHILLIPS WAS BORN AND RAISED IN GARY. HALFWAY THROUGH THE WAR, HE WAS INDUCTED INTO THE ARMY AND FOUGHT COURAGEOUSLY. LATER HE SAFELY RETURNED TO RESIDE IN GARY WHERE HE STILL LIVES VERY HAPPILY WITH HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

Q: Mr. Phillips, would you describe what it was like in Gary before the war?

A: Well, it was a good community, but the people were poor back then. There wasn't a lot of money. There were dirt roads, and they farmed cotton, corn, and such. Then a fellow came in and showed them how to raise tomatoes. They got a good tomato business going, and it sure did help the farmers out because there wasn't much in cotton and corn. There were a lot of buyers who came in. I was born in Gary on July 28, 1924. It was across from Eastside Baptist Church, on the hill where Mr. Comer lives in the log cabin.

Q: Could you tell us a little about your family?

A: Well, of course we farmed and my daddy bought tomatoes for a company in New York when it was tomato season. They were all churchgoing people.

Q: What were your parents' names?

A: J.C. Phillips or Jesse, and Maggie Phillips.

Q: Did you attend Gary school?

A: Yes, I went to the Gary school.

Q: Could you tell us about the kind of job you had while you were young?

A: I had a job putting labels on lugs, which were boxes of tomatoes. I made about fifty cents a day. I bought my first guitar then.

Q: Mr. Phillips, do you remember the attack on Pearl Harbor?

A: Yes, I was in Gary when we heard about it; a bunch of us rode horseback then. There wasn't a lot of cars back then, as there were horses. I was about sixteen. I didn't go into the service until about the middle of the war.

Q: Would you tell us where you went into the military?

A: I went into the Army about the middle of the war. I was too young when it first started. I took basic training in California, then when I had been in the Army for five months, I was in combat. I can't remember exactly when I got to Europe. It was 1944 when I got there and went into combat.

I had gone to England from the United States. Then I went across the

English Channel by ship and landed in France. The June, 1944 D-Day invasion had already taken place. We changed from a larger ship to a landing craft which was tricky as you had to wait for them to drift together before you jumped down to the smaller boat. It was way down to the smaller boat. It was also at night which added to my nervousness.

**SGT. LOVIS PHILLIPS
1945 - IN GERMANY**

I first got into real combat at the time of the Battle of the Bulge in late 1944. That was Hitler's last shot at whipping us. I was in the 69th Infantry Division. It was a young outfit, and later was disbanded at war's end. I was a rifleman. All but seven of us in my platoon ended up getting killed or wounded. I became a squad leader with the rank of sergeant. I hadn't been in the Army but five months at that time.

The Lord was good to me as I only got hit a couple of times. My feet froze one time. I was in combat and got a battle star in France at The Huertgen Forest. Then we went into Germany. We came upon the Siegfried Line. It looked like tombstones all over about waist high. These were concrete tank barriers to stop them from going through. There were also many pillboxes for machine guns, plus eight to ten foot concrete walls. We almost never got through there.

I was in the infantry, and it seemed all we did was run dig holes. I was in combat briefly in the Huertgen Forest in France. Then I really got in to it when we reached Germany. That's when we got all those casualties. I got a minor wound and just went to an aide station where they put some healing powder on me. They also gave me some foot powder for my frozen feet. I was there a week, and then went back into combat.

I got into hand-to-hand fighting one time. That was rough. We had bayonets on our riffles. They always told us, "if you stick it in somebody, pull it out the same way or it would hang on you. I tried not to use that. I was always lucky to have a bullet in my rifle. One time I ran out of ammunition but got some off a dead GI.

One time a German soldier shot at me even before I saw him. I wasn't aware he was near. I was on a long line of soldiers moving up. There was a company on each side of us also advancing. The grass was about three feet high. This German raised up and fired at me but missed. I turned and fired at him, and he went down. I was fortunate. Then I went forward and shot him again. It was just so bad stuff. I've never liked to talk much about this part of my experiences.

The war was rough on the civilians in the war area. Seeing the dead children where bombs had hit was sad to see. Most of the time they had to live in the basement of their homes. They were like bomb shelters, but often those had to live in those cellars after the rest of the homes had been destroyed.

LOVIS PHILLIPS 1945 LAST PATROL. LARGE CANNON IN GERMANY.

I was on patrol one night and got in a house. Machine gun fire and shells were coming in our direction. I ran into this old house, but it didn't have a basement. It was part of a small community. The villages were close to each other. The farmers lived in the towns and farmed the land in between the towns.

Anyway, I had gone into this house. There were three or four guys with me. There was some shelling but the machine gun fire could really rattle the houses. I was laying on the floor, and could hear something rattling above my head. It was this crucifix of Christ. I ran my hand up the wall to see what it was. It was dark, I got it and put it in my pocket. Someone said it's a good luck charm, but I told them what that represented was and what really counted. I kept the cross in my pocket the whole time until I got home.

LOVIS PHILLIPS LAST PATROL BEFORE THE WAR WAS OVER IN GERMANY.

I was in Europe for 18 months, and for most of that time was in combat. Germany had lost their main power because of losing their gasoline supplies. So we cut through Germany fast, so we could meet up with the Russians who we coming from the east. My squad was with some tanks. We usually walked, but would ride on tanks when we could. We were looking to make contact with the Russians. We met them on May 8, 1945, at the Elbe River.

We got to the river ahead of them. Then they appeared on the opposite bank. They were riding on wagons. They also had tanks and trucks which were our models they got from us. They were proud to see us, and we were proud to see them. There were some culture differences. I grew up in Gary where we didn't kiss each other in greeting. I didn't know the customs over there.

I happened to be at a bridge which hadn't been blown out. This Russian officer came up riding with a driver and with a women soldier like our WAC's. He came up saluting. I was ready to shake hands with him. He grabbed my hand and pulled me to him and kissed me on one cheek and then kissed me on the other one. I thought, "Lord, what's going on here?" I was raised in Gary and men didn't kiss there, at least another man.

LOVIS PHILLIPS IN GERMANY 1946

We were proud to see the Russians.

CHRISTMAS DAY WITH A PISTOL IN MY POCKET. THERE WEREN'T ANY GUARDS THAT DAY.

Just before we met them, the Germans were trying to give up to the Americans and not to the Russians. They were afraid that the Russians would kill them. They came in to us, which was the infantry in the front lines. They got to coming in by company formation. We didn't have anybody to guard them. We told them to throw their guns in a pile and keep walking down the road. We knew there would be some GI's down there, further back on the road.

When we met the Russians, I couldn't talk Russian at all. I knew just a little German with an East Texas accent. We had our best luck talking to the Russians in German as we both knew a little of the language. We did the best we could.

You really didn't know what the other fellow knew. We took a German prisoner and asked him how many more there were in front of us. One of my men took his watch off of him to keep it. Then the German asked me in perfect

English , "Why did you let him take my watch?"

Later I was on a trip from Norway to Germany guarding returning German prisoners when the atom bomb fell on Japan. The war was over. The Germans were being taken to France to clear mine fields. I made five trips doing that between Norway and France. One time we guarded a car load of their women soldiers. They were well behaved. The prisoners were moved on flatcars and we rode in boxcars or cattle car. They were know as "40 and 8" as they could carry 40 men or about 8 horses normally. On our trip the guards had more space as we traveled four to a car.

Lovis Phillips lived in these tents at LeHarve Frnce, waiting for a ship to come home.

A guy hollered at me one day, "Hey sergeant, can I have that can over there?" He spoke really good English. I thought at first he was one of the American soldiers. I told him I couldn't give him a can to sit on because none of the others had one. I asked him, "Where did you learn to speak English like that? "He said, "well, I lived 12 years in New York." I asked him how he liked it there, and he replied, "Fine, but it cost too much money to live. I still have a brother living there."

1946 Lovis Phillips and a friend that was in his squad waiting for a ship to come back to USA

One time a funny thing happened: They were shooting at us one time. They said one time that just because you were retreating didn't mean you were losing. I didn't know what it was, but we were running backwards, It was level ground and they were shelling us. Machine guns were shooting at us. I jumped off a little road jumped into a ditch. It was a sewage line. I went up to my neck in it. We didn't get to bathe very often. I wore those stiff clothes three or four days before I got to wash them off. Some others had followed me into the ditch as it seemed the safest place at the time.

One time we took a town that was a resort. It was in the mountains. The water there was warm like I guess it is in Arkansas. We were proud to find that warm water. We all took a long bath. It was freezing weather outside but the water did feel good. It was cold getting our clothes back on again.

Q: What year did you get back to the United States?

A: I got back at the first of 1946.

Q: How had Gary changed when you got back?

A: Well, the tomato business had just about went out of business. People just quit raising them.

Q: Where did you say you were discharged?

A: I was discharged in San Antonio, around the first of 1946.

Q: What kind of job did you acquire when you returned?

A: Well, I farmed and raised cattle, and worked for the highway department.

Q: How has life been since the war?

A: Well, it's gotten better financially, but the people who moved off just before the war, to go to the defense plants, never came back. That's why there are not many people here now.

Q: Could you tell us what kind of things you saw while in the service?

Lovis Phillips and Crucifix He Found in War in Germany

A: I got to see the Statue of Liberty on the way home, the Napoleon Monument which the bombs and shells bounced off of, and I witnessed many deaths. I went into hand to hand combat one time, but most of the time I had shells in my rifle. But if you haven't been in something like that, it's hard to explain. I wouldn't want to go through it again, but I wouldn't take a pretty penny for the experience.

Q: Could you tell us about your training?

A: We did a lot of walking. It was funny because I didn't know what a hand grenade was. We had to practice throwing them. We had a big circle and we had to throw them in the middle. It didn't make much noise when it went off. Just a little stopper popped out, I thought that was the real thing. Things were different when I got hold of a real one. One time we were in training and were supposed to learn how to shoot the grenade launcher off the end of our rifle. I got ready to shoot and relaxed too much. The rifles flew out of my hands. I knew I was going to get griped out and put on KP for the longest time, but the instructor was looking the other way. I crawled out there and got my gun. A lot of funny things happened even in combat, even when it was serious.

Q: Do you ever get in touch with any of the guys in your outfit?

A: No, I haven't. There's just one guy in North Carolina that comes and sees me. His name is Gary Check. He was in my squad. He had been in the Army a lot longer than I had. He came down two or three years ago to see me.

Q: Are you married now?

A: I got married in 1943 to Linda Joe Collins. We have two kids, Larry Phillips and Beverly Davis. She's a teacher in Liberty, Texas.

GEORGE WEST

GEORGE WEST PARTICIPATED IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR BY FLYING IN THE U.S. 8TH AIR FORCE, WHICH BOMBED GERMANY. THE U.S. AIR FORCE WAS UNIQUE IN ITS USE OF STRATEGIC AIR POWER BY PRECISION DAYLIGHT BOMBING, WHICH HAD NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE. DAYLIGHT BOMBING WAS A FAR MORE ACCURATE METHOD OF STRIKING THE GERMAN WAR MACHINE. THIS TYPE OF BOMBING WAS HIGHLY DANGEROUS, BUT IT WEAKENED GERMANY CONSIDERABLY. THE SUCCESS OF THE 8TH AIR FORCE WAS DUE IN GREAT PART TO PEOPLE LIKE GEORGE WEST AND HIS FRIEND, GEORGE UNDERWOOD, WHO GREW UP TOGETHER IN CARTHAGE, TX. THEY WENT OFF TO WAR TOGETHER TO FIGHT IN THE SKIES OVER GERMANY. BUT GEORGE UNDERWOOD DIED ON HIS 13TH MISSION AS A BOMBER PILOT. GEORGE WEST CAME HOME IN 1945. HE HASN'T BEEN IN A PLANE AGAIN FOR THE PAST 50 YEARS.

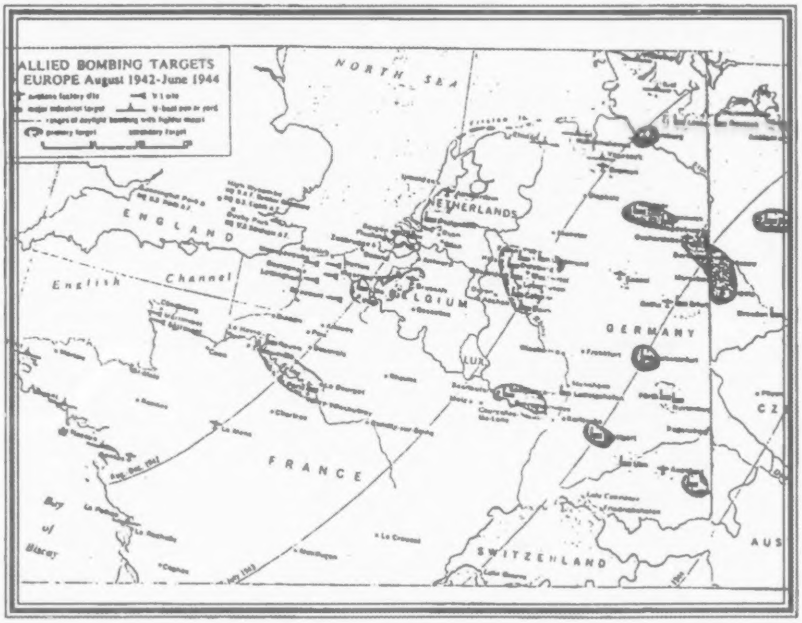
GOERGE WEST, MAY 1935 CHS GRADUATION AGE 16

I felt that this would be interesting because of myself being named George and my friend's name being George, and that we grew up together. We both eventually married two girls from Carthage named Louise. We started school and remained together all the way through the Air Corps. The only difference was that I came back and he didn't.

In the beginning of World War II you had to be a college graduate to enter the Air Corps. There were so many people getting killed that they would let you into the Air Corps without any college degree. George "Buddy" Underwood, Clifford Smith, M.J. Tarbor, and myself all went to Barksdale to take the examination. We all passed and entered the Air Corps about April of 1942. We were then given a furlough and didn't have to report until July.

I remember it so well. We left Carthage on July 30, 1942, to go to Barksdale. At the time Shreveport only had two clothing stores, Stines and the OPO, "One Price Only," and all they had were suits. I was so poor that the suit I bought at the OPO, for fifteen dollars, was the only clothes I had until I was issued a uniform in Nashville, Tennessee. I wore that suit all the time. I even marched around in rain and shine in that suit. It went through it all. Later on that suit drew up to about my ankles. While we were in Nashville they classified us, and we stayed there for about two weeks. We were on K.P. (Kitchen Patrol) and one night we washed a stack of pans that were, it seemed twenty feet high. I have never seen that many dishes to wash in my life. From there I was transferred to Montgomery, Alabama. We stayed there for about nine weeks. At Alabama there were at least 500 cadets. Here we were so busy that it seemed we hardly had time to eat. From Alabama we transferred to Union City, Tennessee and that is where we finally saw our first airplanes. These planes were what they called the PT-17's. I had never flown airplanes or anything else in my life. I could barely fly a kite. When I got into that thing, I didn't know what I'd gotten myself into.

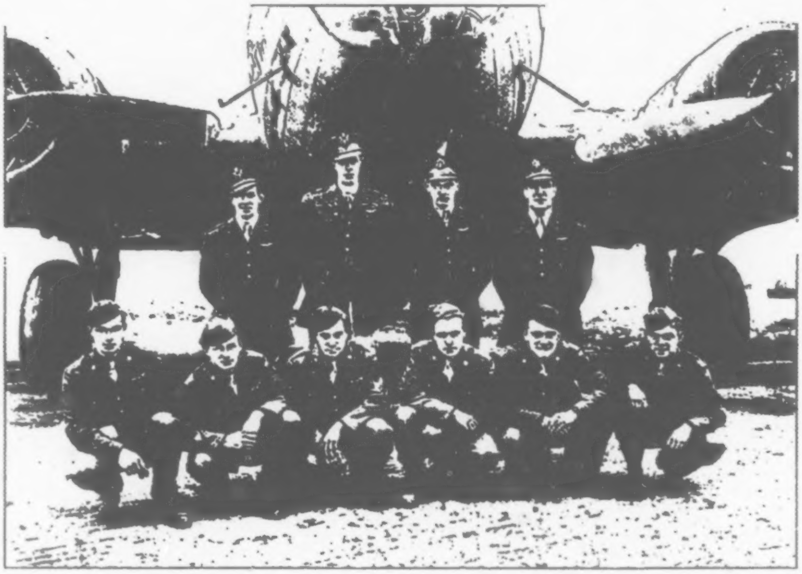
On my first flight, I got lost. I flew around and didn't know where I was, being in Tennessee and not in Texas. I'd fly along a railroad station and see a sign, but I didn't know where it was. I didn't know anything about Tennessee. The plane had a gas gauge, and it kept going down, so I picked me out a big field and landed there. At that time if you landed and didn't call it in, they would wash you out. So, I called in and they sent me a couple of planes to pick me up and bring me in. I think that I'm the only one who never got lost again because I carried a map and I always knew where I was. We went from there to Greenville, Mississippi for basic training. We left Greenville on February 28, 1943, and went to Indiana. From there we went to Europe in August. It was a year from when we started, and I was flying an airplane. It was remarkable that we could go through that fast.



We were the first replacements and we thought that we were really something because Clark Gable had been over there. We soon found out that he had flown only five missions and went home. At that time you had to fly twenty-five missions before they sent you home. But when I got over there nobody had ever done twenty-five missions, and that really shook me up.

They figured out how many missions you could do according to the percentage you could do without being killed. They figured they you could do twenty-four, so they added one more and if you did twenty-five, you got to go home. As the missions got better, your odds went up, so they raised the number of missions. I had about 16 missions when they raised it to thirty. They made me do twenty-eight. My crew was the only one that ever finished all twenty-eight missions without being wounded.

The American 8th Air Force was flying over Europe in daylight raids. The English (Royal Air Force) was flying from England at night on their raids. Our commander was General Doolittle, and he said we were going to Berlin, and better yet, we were going to call them and tell them that we were coming. He did just that, and we went that day. At that time it was the longest raid that we had ever pulled off with about eight hundred bombers. It was the largest air battle that had ever been flown over Europe up to then. I recieved the Distinguished Flying Cross on this mission to Berlin. The reason I recieved DFC for this mission was because we had lost about one fourth of our oxygen before we got over there. We were able to survive the worst. We lost sixty-nine B-17's on the raid, our most losses ever on a single raid.



GBW ON L-BACK ROW AND CREW IN FRONT OF B-17, THE "WEST END" NAMED IN HONOR OF LOUISE WEST

The worst mission that I was on was to Brunswick, Germany. It was the worst because the enemy fighters would fly in the contrails and shoot the hell out

LT. GEORGE BERRY WEST WINS DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

of us, because we couldn't see them coming up behind us and taking evasive action. The flak was really bad also. When we came back from Brunswick, we had to scrap my plane because it had one hundred eighty-seven holes in it, but no one was wounded.

During the mission to Kiel, the plane above me came down to let his bombs out and the bombardier fell out. We found out later that he had passed out right before he fell out of his plane. But he had come to before he hit the ground and pulled his parachute. He was then a P.O.W. (Prisoner of War). After the first Schweinfurt mission, we almost stopped bombing because we lost so many people. I wasn't on the first one, but I was on the ones in February 24 and April 27, which were the ones where we destroyed the ball bearing factory. The reason we had so many problems was because the Germans were really protecting the thing. It was so far that they cut your fuel so you could carry extra bombs. You would run out of fuel if you didn't conserve it to the last drop. It was hard to conserve that much fuel because you had to fly in formation all the way there and back. You had to stay in formation, because if you didn't the Germans would cut you out. They would shoot the dickens out of you if you got out by yourself. That was your main problem.

My base alone went on three hundred and sixteen missions. We dropped twenty-two thousand, four hundred and fifteen tons of bombs on Europe. We lost one hundred and fifty-nine planes, one thousand, five hundred and seventy-

AFTER LAST MISSION-TIRED BUT READY TO GO HOME GBW ON FAR RIGHT WING COMMANDER COLONEL DALEO. SMITH (FRONT ON R.) FLEW WITH THEM ON LAST MISSION.

JULY, 1944

nine men, and destroyed one hundred and sixteen enemy aircraft.

My childhood friend, George Underwood, was on his 13th mission when he died. He went down in the English Channel and washed ashore later. I don't know what really happened other than the fact that he was trying to get back. I always thought that maybe he ran out of gas, and he tried to ditch. What it was, was that if you had to ditch, you knew you had better do it before you got to the English Coast, because the English had the coast line mined. I think what really happened was that he was trying so hard to get back that when he ran out of fuel, he was so close to the coast line, that he hit a mine when he tried to ditch. Otherwise I don't think his body would have washed up if he hadn't been so close to the shore. It seemed that George had real hard luck all through the war. One time while crossing the English Channel, going over there, the gunners were testing their guns, and his copilot got shot in the head. Things like that made him seem jinxed or something. On February 22, 1944, on his 13th mission, George Underwood was killed.

After I got back to the states, they sent me to Santa Monica, California. I stayed there about two weeks at a nice recreation center, and then they transferred me to Galveston. I thought they were going to start another mission going over seas to Japan, so I wrote my commanding officer telling him that I wanted to go. He got me transferred to Columbus, Ohio, where I started B-29 school. I went from there to Kansas and started instructing B-29 school. You had to instruct three classes before you could go on a mission overseas. I was on my third class when the war was over. B-29's were the last planes I ever flew, and I really enjoyed them.

After the war I came back home and went to work with the gas company in Carthage, out on the Henderson highway. I retired from the gas company in 1984.

The worst part of my life was when my best friend, George Underwood, who went into the war with me, didn't come back. At the time, war was a terrible experience, but I wouldn't take anything in the world for it.

There are two people here in Carthage who were overseas with the Eighth Air force at the same time I was. The first was Everett Woodard, who was a waist gunner. He won the Silver Star on the Brunswick raid I was on. And J.W. "Jake" Woodard was a navigator, and was on the Berlin raid of March 6, 1944.

THE STORY OF A MISSION

The night before we were to go a mission, the orders would come in from the headquarters in London. We were alerted that night, but we didn't know our specific orders. The next morning, usually around four o'clock, the staff would come around and wake us up in the barracks. It was really cold that early. We would have just a few minutes to get up and get some clothes on. Then we would get on a truck that would haul us about a mile to the mess hall. Mission mornings were the only times when we had fresh eggs for breakfast.

After we ate, usually about five o'clock, we were loaded back on the truck and carried to a briefing room. All of the pilots would go into one room. The navigators, bombardiers, and gunners all had a separate briefing room. In the briefing rooms they would pull a big curtain out from over a map of Europe. On this map it would have a red string going into the target and a green string showing the way out from the target. After they briefed us and told us how to go in, where the enemy aircraft were concentrated, and whether we were going to have to fly up through an overcast, we would pick up our flying equipment in a duffel bag. Then we would go to our planes.

It would usually be about a mile out in the field. The ground crew was all at the plane, and they would have it serviced. At that time we would check with the ground crew about the plane to see if there was anything wrong with it that they knew about. Usually they had worked on it all night to get it in shape. At this time the crew would be loading their guns while the pilot would go around and check everything he could find on the outside of the plane. Then he would check each crew member to be sure each one had his proper equipment inside the plane. We didn't use any outside radio at all because the Germans would pick it up if we did. At this time we would start our engines. We would have to taxi out because the planes were lined up on the strips of runways.

We would take off one right after the other, every thirty seconds until we were all in the air. If we were flying up over an overcast, what the pilot would do then, was when he took off, he would maybe climb five hundred feet a minute at airspeed one hundred fifty miles an hour. He might maintain that heading for five minutes, then he would do a one hundred eighty degree turn and come back because there would be another airfield over there that was taking off. All of this time we wouldn't be able to see anything while we were in that cloud. Most of the time up around nine or ten thousand feet, it was cloudy. After we got above these clouds, it was clear and pretty.

When we got up above the clouds, we would then begin to get in formation. Most of the time when we reached the English coast, we would be in a group. The average mission would usually last about eight to ten hours. We would have to fly formation for that length of time, with our wing tips overlapping each other. The pilots would have to sit there and watch the other planes constantly for eight hours. Normally the lead plane would have a bomb sight in it and what we called the deputy lead which was the number two plane, would have a bomb sight. They were the only two planes that had bomb sights. These planes would get where they called the Initial Point (I.P.), maybe thirty miles from the center of Berlin, where we were trying to bomb. Everyone would open their bombbay doors and get ready. The lead plane would be sighting on the target. As soon as he dropped his bombs everyone else would drop theirs. Nobody sighted except that one guy. If he got shot down then, the deputy lead would sight. I only remember a lead plane getting shot down once. I was deputy lead, and my bombardier got to sight that time.

They had a big coast defense gun at that place we were trying to knock out. The flak from the antiaircraft guns was real bad while we were over the targets. The German aircraft wouldn't bother us while we were in the flak because they didn't want to get in it. But as soon as we got out from over the target, then here they would come. If we were flying real close formations, then they didn't like to mess with us.

Usually we got back about three or four o'clock in the afternoon. The planes who had someone wounded would land first. After we had all landed, there would be a truck there to pick us up and take us back to the place where the intelligence officers would go over the mission with us. They wanted to know how many planes were shot down, or how many we saw go down. They wanted to know about the enemy air fighters and how bad the flak was over the target. They would go over how good we were in formation. They always took photographs of the bombs sight. They could tell if one's bombs were out away from the others, they could tell that he was not flying good formation.

LOUISE AND GEORGE WEST

After that we would usually go back to the officers club or the mess hall and get something to eat because we had not eaten since breakfast. We usually carried a couple of Milky Ways or Mars Bars along on the mission. So if one of us bailed out he would have something to eat while he was over there. We usually ate them on the way back. After mess hall, or when we were finished eating, we would usually go back to the officers club and sit there and pass out the bull about the missions, talk to all of the rest of the guys, and buy up all of the scotch we could get. They didn't have a lot of scotch. We were usually so keyed up by then that we stayed up until at least midnight before going to the barracks. The barracks were usually so cold that we couldn't hardly stand them. The only heat we had in the barracks was a small stove. It was fired with coke. It was hard to build a fire with that coke. You would freeze to death. It was liable to take an hour to get the fire started. After I was over there awhile, I rigged me up some electric heaters. Usually the MPs would come by, and if we had any electric heaters up they would take them down.

PANOLA WATCHMAN

CARTHAGE PILOTS MAKE LONDON PEOPLE LOOK SKYWARD AFTER RAID

A few short months ago a couple of good fellows were with us here in Carthage. One was working in a hardware store and the other was helping dig a few oil wells around the country. Both were average American citizens, good husbands, and friendly. Both of these fellows were pretty good with the shotgun. The writer knows, for we used to hunt once in a while with one of them. Now, these boys are out there hunting on a larger reservation. They are parading around up in the sky all over Adolph's Fortress Europe. The only thing wrong about calling Adolph's Empire 'Fortress Europe' is that his Fortresses just aren't elevated. His Fortress doesn't fly. It doesn't move. It is something he seized and took from a weak group of little nations. But by the time the editor's Victory Garden sprouts, this silly idea born in the brain of Adolph and concerning German domination of all free peoples in the world, will have been overwhelmingly crushed. Men like LT. GEORGE BERRY WEST and LT. GEORGE UNDERWOOD will have played a major part in the crushing drama. For it is of these two officers of the United States Air Corps that we write. Lieutenants West and Underwood are out of our way of life, and they exemplify our way of living, and they both have every possible reason on earth to want to get this terrible thing in Europe over with as soon as possible.

The editor wants to be plain and talk simply in this article. We can think of no better way to portray our feelings than to reveal facts. Monday morning, as in mornings past, we visited the post office to look over the population, and see what creditors had decided to spend another three cent stamp to remind us of some unpaid account here or there. (With the paper shortage on these excess bills are unpatriotic.) We found the two Louises deeply engrossed in the reading of their letters, and Louise Underwood held a handful of clippings, and Mrs. West had more headlines pinned to her billet from "Bojak" that we have set up in a couple of months here in the paper office. These war wives-fine, congenial, loyal, devoted, all American wives of two brave pilots were pouring over their daily communiques. Talk about writing your men in service-women like Mrs. West and Mrs. Underwood are living on the lines their husbands write thousands of miles away. You can disappoint a serviceman by not writing, but a serviceman can surely disappoint his loved ones by not writing, too.

Mrs. Underwood asked us to read a part of her letter from Buddy. The first page was a gem. It was matter-of-fact, clear, complete, and concise. The same old modest Buddy-never asking for recognition, glory, praise, or honor. Talking about a friend who had just been promoted to First Lieutenant-talking about ordinary things of life-about getting up and eating breakfast. But Lt. Underwood had more to say on the second page-much more; and that third page held a secret not known to the writer-no doubt that secret was not as military as personal.

One of the clippings from a London Daily sent Mrs. West told of the biggest air raid of the year on Europe. Another clipping sent Mrs. Underwood told of the big raid of January 11th.

When the Flying Fortresses and Liberators returned from an unfriendly and uninvited jaunt to Adolph's land, the people of London, shopo-girls; clerks; mechanics; photographers and maybe a county editor or two poked their heads out of windows to watch the big victory birds fly over. In the formation returning from Germany were hundreds of big planes-and two of those planes were winging their way back to British bases because of the ability and daring of two home town boys - two first class pilots from our town, Carthage, Texas.

AT CHAMPLIN PLANT

If you can't find any other reason to buy a bond in the Fourth War Loan Drive, then by all things right, back up Buddy and Bojack by getting down on the dotted line immediately.

We can't all experience the thrill of riding homeward - victory bound, in a great, giant bomber, but we can feel the thrill in knowing that we said to LIEUTENANTS UNDERWOOD and WEST through bond purchases, "Good work fellows and God Bless you both."

Travis Williamson

TRAVIS WILLIAMSON IS A NATIVE EAST TEXAN WHO GREW UP HERE IN THE YEARS BEFORE WORLD WAR II. COMPARED TO SOME OF THE OTHERS WHO WE INTERVIEWED ON THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE WAR, HE GOT SOMETHING OF A LATE START. BUT ONCE MR. WILLIAMSON GOT TO EUROPE IN LATE 1944, HE MANAGED TO PACK A LIFETIME OF ADVENTURE INTO A PERIOD OF A FEW MONTHS. HIS CAREER SINCE THEN HAD BEEN PRIMARILY WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AS A COLLEGE ADMINISTRATOR. IN RETIREMENT HE HAS NOT SLOWED DOWN EITHER. TRAVIS WILLIAMSON HAD BEEN THE PRESIDENT OF THE PANOLA COUNTY HISTORICAL FOUNDATION, AND WITH HIS WIFE HELEN, PROVIDED THE DEDICATION TO MAKE THE HERITAGE HALL A REALITY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF PANOLA COUNTY HISTORY.

I was born in Tenaha, Texas, on November 24, 1921. I was born in a house next to my Grandfather and Grandmother Pou where my mother was born. The house had been built for me to be born in. My daddy had swapped property with his brother-in-law for some of their property and built the house. We lived there for three years, then we moved to Panola County, next to where he'd been born. So we moved to the Antioch Community in 1925.

TRAVIS WILLIAMSON

I went to Antioch Public School through the seventh grade, and then I came to Carthage High School. I graduated in 1941. Immediately after that I went over to a college in Marshall. It was a two year Baptist junior college. This was the Fall of 1941. I went up to the attack of Pearl Harbor on December 7.

I immediately thought as to what I wanted to do in the war effort. My first idea was to get some special training and be an airplane builder. So I did. There was a plant in Dallas that taught sheet metal for aircraft construction so I went there. I think it was called Southwest Aeronautics Training, or something. I finished the course and came home. I was there about ten days and got a call from North American Aviation. They wanted me to go to work in Hawthorn, California to help build B-

25 bombers and P-51 fighters. So I went back to Dallas and took a ten day North American training program. They were ready to ship me to California, but I said, "Nope, I don't think this is what I need to do." So I came home and thought about it, and then gave them a call to get someone else for I was going back to school in Marshall. I entered the spring semester in March, 1942.

Then on April, 1942, I went to Longview and visited with the Air Corps recruiter. He sent me to Tyler to take the test and I was sworn in that day. At that time they had what they called a "college deferral program." They had all the pilots they needed at the time, and the training schools were all filled up. So they told me I would get six to eight months deferral, and for me to stay in school. So I stayed longer. It wasn't until March, 1943 I was called to active duty.

I went to Wichita Falls, Texas, Shepard Air Force Base, for Basic Training. I was there for however long the basic training took, then went to Austin College (Sherman, Texas) for Aviation Cadet Training. I caught the mumps and stayed 21 days in the hospital at Shepard. Then I returned to Austin College to finish my training program and then was shipped to San Antonio, the Aviation Cadet Center. That was where we had all our ground school training-meteorology, aerodynamics, mechanics, mathematics, weather, and the other things. Then I was shipped out to Pine Bluff, Arkansas for Primary Training. We did our first flying in single engine aircraft and soloed for the first time. After the Primary Training I was sent to Basic Training at Independence, Kansas. There I flew the PT-13, PT-14, and PT-15. The PT-14 was a North American plane much like the AT-6 except the wheels didn't retract. We finished Basic Training at Independence and then went to Lubbock, Texas for Advanced Training. Then they decided if we would be fighter pilots or bomber pilots. Anyone over six feet automatically went into bombers. I was over six feet so I got two engine Cessna Trainers. I graduated in June, 1944, as a pilot and as 2nd Lieutenant. I was in training over a year. The parts broke down into about three months each; basics, primary, advanced.

I was reassigned there in Lubbock as an instructor-pilot. The reason was they didn't have an overseas assignment open. I went home on furlough and bought a car and brought it back to Lubbock. I was an instructor-pilot there through October, 1944. I then received a B-24 assignment and was to go to Lincoln, Nebraska to join my crew. From there we went to Boise, Idaho, for overseas training. After that time of B-24 training we went to Topeka, Kansas, for our overseas assignment. Our orders were to go by ship and not to fly our own plane. So we went to Newport News, Virginia, and that's where we shipped out from.

TRAVIS WILLIAMSON AS A PILOT

Fortunately we went on a French luxury liner refitted as a troop carrier. The food was fantastic. We had French chefs and waiters who knew how to serve. So that took a long time as we were in a convoy. We moved slowly and were interrupted by German subs several times. We had to zig-zag a lot. I think we were on the ocean over three weeks getting across to Gibraltar. It was interesting there, as they had a complete gate across the Strait of Gibraltar to Africa, between the Atlantic into the Mediterranean. I had never seen anything like that. Most of the enemy subs were out of the Mediterranean and they didn't want anymore in there. So each time a ship went through, they opened a gate and sent divers down to watch that no subs got through, too. I had my 22nd birthday crossing the Mediterranean between Gibraltar and Italy. We finally got to Naples which had been bombed until shortly before we arrived. We used as a dock, to leave our ship, another ship laying on its side in the harbor.

We changed ships there and got on an English ship. The food was horrible. We had been spoiled by the French liner. But I did get a nice suite on one of the upper decks which was especially equipped. We went from Naples to the south end of Italy. We were on our way to Bari where we received our base assignments. We were part of the 15th Air Force. My unit then was the 456th Bomb Group and the 747th Squadron at Cerignola, Italy. This was just in from the heel of the boot in southern Italy. There were a lot of bases in the area from North Africa. E.B. Morrison of Carthage was an intelligence officer for the 455th Bomb Group near us. Their planes had the diamond tail markings on their planes and ours had the checker board. I did get in contact with E.B. while I was there.

On the 26th of December, 1944, on my third mission, we flew to Osuviecim, Poland. It was one of our longer missions, and was a ball bearing industrial target. I was shot down on my third mission, flying with Leon Bogue's crew on that particular mission. The bombardier of that crew was named Ted Knies and lives in Austin.

On the Osuviecim raid, we lost two engines over the target from flak. We were instructed if we lost one or two engine, or had any mechanical difficulty, our only route for escape was to head for Russia. There were a number of bases plotted in a path we could find as we flew east. Our first inclination after we lost the two engines over the target was to head for Russia.

So we had three fighter planes, which left the main group to escort us. They were P - 38's, there to protect the bombers. They stayed with us until we got to be about where we could find a friendly base, then they left us on our own. They had to get home. Then German fighters came. Our right tail stabilizer was shot off. A 20 millimeter shell went through the middle of our fuselage and knocked out our communications. So we had no choice but to bail out of the plane.

We were up over a cloud cover, so we didn't know exactly where we were. We started bailing out. The first pilot reached for his chute to get out of there. And his chute and his harness wouldn't match. That was an unusual occurrence, but it could happen because in our locker rooms we had red chutes and red harnesses and blue chutes and blue harnesses. And you had better get a pair to match because you'd need to snap them on. They were a chest pack. He reached back and he had a red cute and a blue harness, so he had two rings and you could snap them together. So he asked the engineer to go back to the emergency pack in the rear of the plane. So he had to go through the bomb have to get there, but brought back a seat pack. I was flying the plane at this time and fighting to keep it under control as we were flying with the two engines out. One side of the plane wanted to turn over. So I was straining like anything to keep the plane upright while he was getting in his chute. I was what you call the copilot. I got everybody out and then let go of the controls and got to the bomb bay to get out myself. The plane was already beginning to roll over. I prayed to the Lord to get me out of there because once the plane was upside down there would be no way to get out. But I got out.

I had a pair of combat boots tied to my harness because in the airplane we were flying with electric boots and when you got to the ground you couldn't walk in them very well. So before I got ready to jump, I got those boots out from behind my seat and tied them to the harness. The first thing after I jumped out, I hit the slip stream from the airplane and those boots came up and hit me right in the face, and my helmet went off. But I figured I was at least out of the plane and got the parachute open. Then I hit the top of a tree. So I was only 150-180 feet from the ground fog. Thus the plane hit the ground not far from where I landed.

Because of the adjacent noise from the crash, I knew people would be about looking for me. First thing after I hit the ground was to grab up my parachute and run into the woods some distance away and I thought it was hidden. I was in the woods and was aware of coming and goings and could hear gunfire.

I said to myself, "I'm closer to the front line than I thought." So I reached down in my pocket and pulled out my escape pack. It was a plastic container about six by six inches and an inch deep. It fit into my pocket. I reached in to get my compass to see which direction to go. I got the compass out and looked at it. It was pointing north in one direction. I tried it again and it pointed to north in another direction. So I thought my best escape was to get in the woods and stay in the woods. So that's where I headed.

I had been in the woods for awhile when I heard some whistling. I looked around and saw a woods road like in East Texas used as a wagon trail. I began to watch this old gentleman in a black coat, a black hat, and he was happy. We had been instructed by our intelligence that if we got shot down to never surrender to a young German. He'd run you through with a bayonet or gladly shoot or stab you. But if we had an opportunity, we should try to find an older person.

So I walked out of the woods to intersect him as he was walking down the road. He was very happy and immediately reached in his coat and pulled out a bottle of wine to share with me. Of course I couldn't speak a word of Hungarian, and he couldn't speak a word of English. I discovered later I was in Hungary, not too far from Budapest in the central part.

Well, I kept trying to talk to him, and he kept trying to share his wine with me. As we went along I looked back over a field, and I thought I saw somebody. Sure enough there were two men coming, and as they got closer, I saw one of them had something under his arm. They were walking, and the other one had an arm band on. They obviously were on my trail. I guess as I went through the grass, which was covered with like a hoarfrost, I left an easy trail to follow. They got up closer and they waved and I waved back. They came up to us and were also Hungarians. I didn't speak the language, but Tote Lazlo had a band on his arm which said, "Police." They were in like the Home Gaurd. I later learned he was a share cropper and lived with his family. His greeting was to come along with him to get fed and cleaned up.

So as we went along, we passed several houses, and they were homes of farm families who were very friendly. Everyone wanted to share their wine with me. I guess when I had first hit the ground was about 4:30 in the afternoon. So it was after dark soon thereafter. Each one of the farmhouses meant a stop, for none of them had seen an American before. I was an oddity. Then we got to Lazlo's house. He was a tenant farmer and he lived with a family that included two children. There was a teenager, and a little girl, Betty, eight or nine years old. Betty was dressed in a one piece wool suit. It was love at first sight. Betty sat down with me on the couch, and she held onto my left arm. They brought some food in to me, and cleaned up my face.

From about 7:00pm when I arrived at their house, until 1:30 the next day, there would be a knock on the door about every fifteen minutes. A different family from the area just wanted to stop by and see me. They all seemed like very short people. I stood six inches taller than most of them. The men would come in and kiss me on each cheek and shake my hand. The ladies would nod and back up. Each time they would knock on the door, the ladies would vanish. They didn't know who might be coming, Russians or Germans. I kept asking who we were closer to, but they didn't seem to know.

This went on and I must have seen 50 to 60 families. The word got around, so people just kept coming. Then about 1:30 there was a rap on the door, and there were three Russians standing there. I've never seen so many guns in all my life. They had been killing Germans all day and saved every pistol they found. They came in and they and my host and Betty and I were the only ones in the room. The only thing for defense I had was a trench knife. They looked at it and on it was printed "U.S. Air Force", so they were satisfied I was an American flier. There was a table about six feet long, and they about covered it with the pistols they had captured. There must have been a dozen to fifteen Lugers and P-38 pistols.

Well we visited a little bit, and they convinced me I would be best off coming with them. So we got in their small car, and I guess we drove for two and a half hours. We went through a number of guard posts where we had to stop and be checked. But we finally got to their headquarters and talked with their colonel, and talked to him through a dictionary. He clapped his hands, and a lady opened a door. He told her something and she brought in some fried chicken for breakfast. The sun was coming up by that time.

We talked for another 30 or 40 minutes, and then some guards took me to a farm house where two other airmen were who had been picked up. There were three of us together then who had been shot down. We stayed with the Russians as they moved their headquarters two or three times. We were then on the outskirts of Budapest. And on about the 5th or 6th of January, 1945, Budapest fell to the Russians. We then were put on a truck, a U.S. Ford Truck part of the Lend Lease. The bed was loaded with about two feet of horse hides and cow hides that they were sending back to the factory. All the time we were there, we ate horse meat or cow meat, whatever they shot. They used an awful lot of horses with their army to move artillery and things. Almost every day we got a horse ham or shoulder.

The food was prepared in a big black pot on an iron stove. They kept it boiling around the clock. They never turned it off. They just added more meat or more vegetables to their stew. We ate off the country as we went through so whatever they found went into the pot.

Now when we got on the truck to leave they gave us a box with some food. It was bread, which was Russian black bread. You had to saw it to get a piece off. It was nutritional. So they packed the Russian bread and some salt pork - like middlings that you use to make bacon. We ate raw bacon and Russian bread for two or three days while we were on the trucks.

We got down to the border between Hungary and Romania, right on the border. We were put into a hotel and gave us the first good meal I'd had in several days. It was a nice hotel. They had a string ensemble of older men who were good musicians. I recognized they could play a lot of songs. I asked them to play "Indian Love Call" and they did. They started playing all kinds of American music after they discovered I was an American. Well in my escape pack there was $35 in money, gold certified so it was as good as gold. So I sent $5 of that up to the band because they were performing so beautifully. So for the rest of the evening they gave me a concert. We had a good time.

The next time we got on a train, which was the most loaded one I've ever seen. There were Hungarians going into Romania looking for work. People were inside the train and were hanging on the outside, too. It took a few days to get to Bucharest. That was an experience. There was an Allied Mission there - for the Americans, French, English, and Russians. Those soldiers or airmen picked up on the Eastern Front were repatriated through there.

It was a very wonderful experience to see the U.S. flag after being absent almost two months. I stayed in Bucharest for about ten days. The reason I stayed that long was the weather condition. We were snowed in. Normally they were making pickups every few days. But because of the bad weather, they kept stacking us up there and we filled up the hotel.

I moved into a Catholic boys boarding school. It was in a compound thing with a fence around it. But I met some people there when I went out walking. I spent some of my money and bought a camera. I did some ice skating. I went to the theater. Bucharest was very French. I met a family there, and they invited me to their apartment. It was the first time I had been in a high rise apartment. We were up on about the fourteenth floor. I had rice with sugar on it for dessert. That was a first. I had rice pudding, but not rice as a dish with sugar and cream on it. They had a dance for me, and I got to meet a lot of the teenage and subteenage people. This young man who was my host was in medical school. It was an exciting experience to be there after the war had passed them by.

I did get to tour the Ploesti oil fields where we had bombed. There were dud bombs still in the field. I got to see that. I had trained under Colonel Kane at Wichita Falls. They called him "Killer Kane." He lead the Ploesti Raid. They went in at corn stalk level. They went in and dropped their delayed action bombs and another squadron came in from the wrong direction and flew over low where the delayed action bombs were exploding. Several American planes were lost by the bombs dropped by Colonel Kane's squadron, so that's how he got his name.

I got back to my unit in Italy finally. I went to Bari and got a three day rest leave. I flew about five missions. Actually I had flown about fourteen sorties. Are you familiar with the difference between a mission and a sortie? This time during all the missions we flew were such distance that they changed the name from mission to sortie. And a sortie was once over the target. Earlier, some of the missions, if they were over three hours long, it was a double mission, or if it was eight hours long it was a triple mission. So they changed that because they were sending crews back to the U.S. on the basis of only fifteen missions, or twenty or thirty sorties to complete your tour of duty.

I had enough so that I was on my fifteenth sortie. And we were over Prague, Czechoslovakia. That was our target. This was on the 25th of March, 1945. We were on the bomb run and the flak was thick and heavy. Immediately, two engines went out. By this time the radar directed 88 millimeter antiaircraft guns of the Germans were terrific. It was heavily guarded target. With two engines out, we immediately jettisoned out bombs. Again we headed for sanctuary in Russia.

We had been going a good 45 minutes and according to the maps we had, we were beyond the Eastern Front and over Russian territory. We located an airfield and fired the appropriate signal by flare and got the correct signal in return, which meant it was a friendly base. We turned around to head in and looked up. There must have been 100 Germans Me - 109 fighters up in the sky around us. We had no choice as they fired in from of us and flew across our path. We landed at the air base with three propellers feathered which meant we were flying on one engine. We got to the end of the runway, and by the time the plane stopped, we were surrounded by the German soldiers. It was like we were in the middle of an explosion of people.

This German colonel with a monocle in his eye came up. He must have been about five feet six inches. He walked up to me with a pistol with a barrel you could stick your thumb in. I'd never seen anything like it. It was like a 410 shotgun. He goosed me with that pistol in the stomach about three times, and said, "If that plane blows up, I'll kill you." His English was as good as mine. I said, "We have already detonated the Norden bomb sight and jettisoned our bombs, so there's nothing else." He replied, "But if this plane blows up, we kill you."

At this particular time, I was wearing a Colt .45 pistol under my arm. They took that and my watch and anything else of value. They took us into their prison compound. Our first food was limburger cheese. I had never even smelled that before. I got a whiff of that stuff and said, "I don't know if I can even eat that." So I had a silk scarf I had torn off my chute from the earlier time I had bailed out. I took the scarf off and wrapped the cheese in it and stuck it in my clothes away from my nose. Well, you know about the third day that cheese tasted pretty good as we hadn't gotten any other food. The Germans didn't have much.

On the third day the Germans put us on a train and were being sent to Nuremberg where the interrogation center was, and the prison camp we'd be in was there, too. Well, it took us several days because we could only travel at night because American fighters kept shooting up the engines if they appeared in the daytime. And the bombers were going after the tracks. So they'd repair the tracks as they could and move us at night. And they were using Polish and Russia women as their slaves working on the railroads. We would be stopped two or three hours during the night while they repaired the track. These women would come along to work. They were big ladies carrying cross tied on their shoulders. The train would move up as they fixed the tracks.

We finally ended up in Vienna and spent some time there. The only time I've been in jail was there when we had to stop over. Then we got on the train up to Nuremburg. We got there, and they put us in solitary confinement for ten days. Everyday they'd call us out and ask for information. So I'd just give my name, rank, and serial number. They'd kick your shins and fuss at you and send you back to your cell. The interrogators knew more about me and my squadron than I knew. They knew everything, and they just wanted me to confirm it.

On several occasions I was able to visit with some of the elite German fliers. They were interested in our equipment and tactics. They were interesting to talk to. Their English was just as good as mine. Some had been educated in the U.S.

So I went from the interrogation center to a regular prison camp, also in Nuremberg. Then our forces crossed the Rhine River. According to the Geneva Convention, we were not supposed to be within 50 miles of combat, so they turned us loose. We marched to Munich and then down to Mooseburg. I was there for a short time. The Red Cross kept us alive. Once a week their trucks would park by the road and distribute food packages, one for each two of us. We stretched that food. Also, we robbed the German barns we passed for eggs, chickens, apples, potatoes. Then when we got to the other prison, the food supply was short. The Germans didn't even have food to feed themselves. I was a P.O.W. (prisoner of war) for about 45 days and lost 40 pounds. In looking back, we were lucky the Germans did share their food with us. Part of the reason they did was they knew the war was over well before it was over. They couldn't move their vehicles. They were out of fuel. They were using wood chips to run trucks. Their planes were stuck on the ground with no gas. They destroyed some of their own planes because they couldn't use them. Then in May, 1945, the war in Europe ended.

In June, 1945, I flew out of Europe back to the U.S.A. Then I went to the University of Texas and was a college administrator for 30 years. I was the Dean at Panola, and at Centenary, and the evening college at Kilgore.

Now, in total, I flew 35 missions. I had several other shorter missions that weren't counted. I received a Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), and the Air Medal with two clusters. Normally you received an Air Medal after five missions and a cluster for each addition five. When I was awarded the DFC, it was a posthumous award as I was Missing in Action (MIA) at the time. It went to my mother as "next of kin."

As I said, I returned to the U.S. in June, 1945. I was to be reassigned in Florida. My assignment was to be schooled to go to the Pacific. I was to fly the Douglas A-26, an improvement over the older A-20 and B-26.

Well, during that time, my older brother (George), who had been flying with the 20th Air Force, flying B-29's out of India against Japan, got transferred to Tinian Island. That was in the Pacific closer to Japan. Then he was assigned back to Edwards Air Force Base in California for some special training. While he was there, he got to come home on leave, so we got to visit as I was on leave too. I was telling him of the war in Europe, and he told how things were in the Pacific. He said, "I can't tell you what I'm going to do, but you'll know about it." Well, if they had dropped a third atomic bomb, his crew would have dropped it. That was the training they got at Edwards. So then his group was flying mercy missions into Japan with the war over. They were dropping supplies into P.O.W. camps. His crew was shot down, and they were all killed. The Japanese who did it supposedly didn't know the war was over. My brother was buried in Japan near where he went down. After the war his body was returned here, and he was buried in Antioch Cemetery. I was a first lieutenant and he made captain before being killed.

I had a younger brother also who was in the Navy. He was on a cruiser at the fighting around Okinawa. On two or three occasions the Japanese Kamikaze suicide planes came in on his ship. When the war was over, my mother had been through a tough time. George had been reported missing in action earlier after his plane crashed. I was missing in action twice. Then he got killed right when the war was over.

I got married in November, 1946. I had met Helen when we were chemistry partners in college in Marshall before I went off to war. We wrote during the time I was in the service. After the war I was ready to go to Baylor after getting out of the Air Corps in San Antonio. On my way to Waco, I stopped in Austin to see an old roommate. Helen was also at the University of Texas. They both

TRAVIS AND HELEN WILLIAMSON

convinced me I didn't need to go to Baylor. So I joined them in Austin. A year later we were married.

Looking back to what we went through, it was something. The German flak was tough. The guns were in four gun batteries and they'd hook them up with the radar. They'd put a group of the batteries together as they wanted. When you were going to bomb a target, you'd need to line up on it from an I.P. (Initial Point) to get a straight run in on the target. It seemed like thirty minutes to cover the distance, but it was only three to five minutes. The bombardier needed that straight run. And on the path is where you'd find the flak. The Germans lined up their guns on your expected path.

The German fire was accurate. The radar helped on the altitude, and speed and the wind was considered. The first burst would be under your nose, and the next one under one wing. And you knew the next one was going to be right on you. The thing that got the engines was the flak (shrapnel) as the shells covered a big area. It didn't take much to puncture an engine.

German fighters didn't bother us much. We had our own good fighter escorts to keep the German's away. Our P-51's and the P-38's sheltered us. The only time we had trouble was when we were on our own alone, and then German fighters shot us down. The ME-109 was good though. That 20-millimeter cannon in caliber guns in the wings were less of a problem. If they'd had .50 caliber machine guns like our fighters, they would have to be a tough foe.

The German antiaircraft guns we had trouble with were the 88, 105, and 140 millimeter. They had ten times the number of the 88's than the others. If you got over one of their really fortified areas, you could tell when they had the 105 and 140 millimeter guns. The 88 created a black burst in the sky, the 105 was white, and the 140 was yellow. They were radar directed as I said. Those 88's created black clouds you just had to fly through.

Our efforts to bomb Germany was effective and worth the price, I believe. The industry and fuel supplies were crippled. The air battle helped win the ground battle and shortened the war.

I was with the Russians for over a month. I was impressed with them. They knew more about Texas than I knew about Russia. They knew I was a cowboy right off. They were good, common folk. They were anxious to get back to their families. They could really party, but they were fierce soldiers. They needed more and better equipment than they had. But they could fight well with what they had. Their army was less mechanized than ours. I received a broad education on them in a short period of time. I learned much of war and people in general during my time in World War II.

B-24's Preparing For The Next Mission.

EVERETT WOODARD

As a part of our 50th anniversary observance of East Texas and World War 1II, we visited with our neighbor in Carthage, Everett Woodard. We also met his wife, Thelma, whom he met and married in England during another tour with the Air Force following World War II. For Everett Woodard made a career in the Air Force beginning with the early days of the war.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Vernon, Texas, on December 14, 1921.

Q: Where did you go to school and how big was your family?

A: I went to school in Frankston, Texas with my two sisters. My parents are both now dead. My mother died in 1947 and my dad in 1980.

Q: When did you go into the service?

A: I went in July, 1942.

Q: How long did you stay in the service?

A: Altogether I stayed about 24 and a half years.

Q: What has your life been like since World War II?

A: Well, when the war was over, I got out of the service. And I stayed out two years while working. Then in 1947 I went back into the service. I stayed from that time until 1968 and retired.

Q: When did you get married?

A: I got married to Thelma in 1956 when I was back in England with the Air Force.

Q: How many children did you have?

A: We had just one child.

Q: What did you do after you retired from the Air Force?

A: I worked in Turkey for about eight and a half years. Then I worked in Saudi Arabia for awhile. I retired in 1986. That's when I quit working all together.

Q: Why did you go into the Air Corps back in World War II?

A: I was drafted! During the war you didn't have a choice whether you wanted in or out. You were just here. After I had been there, I decided I would stay.

Q: How did you become gunner on a bomber?

A: When I first went into the service, I went in the Army. There was no Air Force. We were crawling around on our stomachs out in Vernon, Utah in hot sand. They wanted gunners, so me and a buddy of mine just decided we would try it. We switched from the Army to the Air Force. It was really the Air Corps then.

Q: Where did you train to become a gunner?

A: I was at Nellis just outside Las Vegas, Nevada. I had seven weeks of gunner's training and went from there to Amarillo, Texas, for six months.

Q: When did you go overseas?

A: I went overseas in September 1943. I was on the Queen Elizabeth to England.

Q: Where you based in England?

A: During the war I was in England. I flew out of England over Germany. During my career in the Air Force, I went back to England twice more.

Q: Were you in a squadron?

A: I was in the 445th Squadron of the 384th Bomb Group. We flew in B-17 bombers.

EVERETT WOODARD, CENTER REAR, AND CREW

Q: Have you stayed in touch with anyone you were with then?

A: Only one, and I recently got in touch with him.

Q: So, its been hard to find them?

Well, when we first got out of the service, we sort of stayed in touch for two or three years. Then we just gradually quit. They have a reunion of the group every year, but I've never gone to any of them. I got all the paper work and everything from them yesterday. They're having the next reunion in Wichita, Kansas, but I doubt I'll go. After all these years, you wouldn't remember anyone anyway.

Q: How many missions did you go on when you were flying against the Germans?

A: I flew 31 missions

Q: I guess your mission to Brunswick, Germany on June 30, 1944, was your most memorable. How may planes did you shoot down that day?

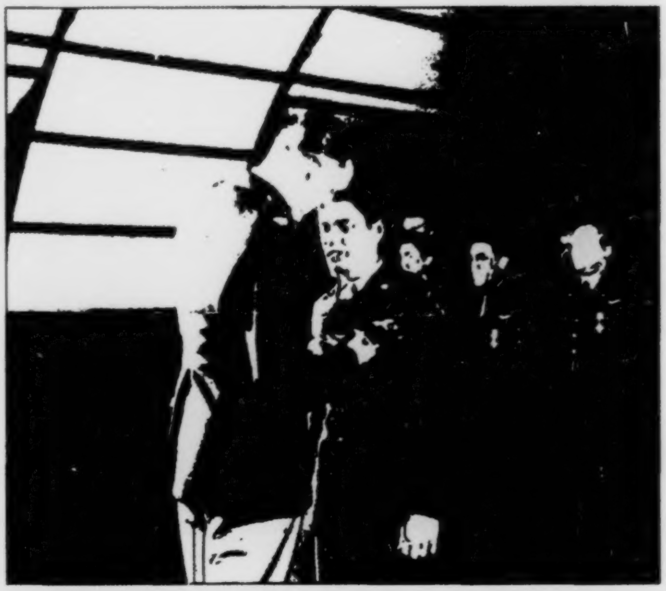
A: Actually I only destroyed one for sure. They said I probably destroyed another one as well.

Q: How did you go about destroying the planes?

A: Well, they came in and attacked the formation. There were probably 75 enemy fighters. So you would try to destroy them, or they would destroy you.

Q: Were you proud when you got the Silver Star?

A: Later I was, but at the time it didn't mean much of anything to me. It was something you got for something you had to do. After the war I got to thinking about it all, but at the time I just wanted out of there.



Everett Woodard receiving Purple Heart

Q: Did you receive the Purple Heart for that same raid to Brunswick?

A: Yes, it was the same day. It's when I got wounded in the legs while fighting off those fighters.

Everett Woodard also shared two newspaper articles with us relating to his career. The first on appeared in the Frankston, Texas paper in 1944 after the Brunswick raid. S\Sgt. Everett D.(Durwood) Woodard, of Frankston, has been awarded the Silver Star for "gallantry for action," and praised highly by his commanding officer for his "skillful airmanship," displayed during a bombing mission over Germany on January 30.

"According to the citation which accompanied the recommendation for the Silver Star, S\Sgt. Woodard, who is 22 years old, prevented "the almost certain destruction of his plane" by manning both waist gun positions by himself when his comrade gunner was knocked out, badly wounded by an explosion of an enemy shell in the gun position, an explosion which also wounded Sgt. Woodard in one leg.

Sgt. Woodard, who is a son of Mr. and Mrs. Everett D. Woodard, Sr., of Frankston, is a waist gunner on a Flying Fortress. He has been stationed in England for several months with the American Army Air Forces, and previously had been given the American Air Medal "for exceptionally meritorious achievement while participating in five separate bomber combat missions over enemy occupied Continental Europe."

Woodard was credited in the citation with definitely destroying one enemy aircraft and probably destroying another during the time he was firing first one waistgun and then the other in warding off continuous, vicious attacks of the enemy fighter planes which attacked his formation while over Europe and which followed it part of the way back on the return trip to their English bases.

A complete copy of the citation given Sgt. Woodard follows:

S\Sgt. Everett D. Woodard,
xxxth Bombardment Squadron,
xxxth bombardment Group (H),

"I take great pleasure in being able to recommend you for the Silver Star for your gallantry in action on the bombing mission over Germany on 30 January 1944. The example of skillful airmanship you displayed on this mission was a credit to yourself and the Group. It is through such acts that we are able to continually press home our blows out the enemy and as the entire xxxth Bombardment Group (H) AAF, am proud of you for your courageous actions."

The following citation was attached to your recommendation:

"For gallantry in action while serving as right waist Gunner on a bombing mission to Bruswick, Germany, 30 January 1944. Flying in the low squadron of the low group, S\Sgt. Woodard's aircraft approaching the I.P. encountered an unexpected cloud formation. Proceeding through these clouds, the squadron became separated from the remainder of the group and was suddenly attacked by twenty (20) enemy fighters, which, coming from the cloud bank, rode in on the aircraft's condensation trails and were at almost point-blank range before the effective fire cloud be directed upon them. In the first blast of fire, S\Sgt. Woodard was wounded in the leg by the explosion of a 20MM shell in his gun position and his left waist gunner was struck a number of times, badly wounded and thrown bleeding and in great pain upon the floor. With complete disregard for his wound or for his own personal safety, despite the repeated strikes upon his aircraft ad the suddenness and viciousness of the attack, S\Sgt. Woodard manned both waist gun positions, firing first one and then the other, warding off enemy attacks so effectively that he destroyed one enemy fighter aircraft and probably destroyed another and enabled his pilot, who had begun evasive action, to prevent the almost certain destruction of their plane. These attacks had been pressed so closely and aggressively by the enemy fighters that three of our planes were destroyed and another so badly damaged that it was forced to turn back. The No. 4 engine of S\Sgt. Woodard's plane was struck and began to run wild. Two large holes were blown in the right wing, and there was a large hole in the left wing shaft the No. 2 engine. Two large holes were ripped in the rudder part of the skin and the waist was shot away, the right stabilizer damaged beyond use and the fuselage punctured with numerous small holes. Both the top and ball turrets were shot out of action and became in operative during the later stage of the attack, the entire oxygen system was destroyed and even though the pilot was diving the aircraft violently and partly out of control for a lower altitude S\Sgt. Woodard continued to man his gun position and ward off enemy attacks. During a lull in the action, he gave efficient emergency first aid to his wounded companion and wrapped him in the clothing and blanket to prevent exposure. Separated from the group, deep in enemy country, badly damaged, and with great uncertainty as to their ability to return to England, flying at reduced speed and very low altitude, subject to imminent danger of attack by enemy fighters and antiaircraft batteries, S\Sgt. Woodard gave an outstanding demonstration of force and courage by assisting to jettisoning all removable equipment to lighten the load, manning both his gun positions and giving encouragement to his fellow crew members. S\Sgt. Woodard's gallantry in this action, his outstanding example of courage, coolness, self-negation for the safety of his fellow crew members and his intelligent use of all facilities available have been an inspiration for his organization."

(Signed) Dale O. Smith

Colonel, Air Corps,

Commanding

EVERETT AND THELMA WOODARD

The second article appeared in an Air Force newspaper in the 1950's and gave a summary of M-Sgt. Woodard's career up to that time.

"M-Sgt. Everett Woodard, Motor Pool supervisor, is in this month's featured NCO. A man with many impressive medals, including the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Cluster, the tall, lanky Texan is a verteran with 12 Air Force years to his credit.

Born in Tyler, Texas, in 1921, "Woody" entered the Army Air Corps in 1942 at the age of twenty.

He received aerial gunnery training at Nellis AFB, Nevada, and graduated from Aircraft Maintenane School at Amarillo Air Terminal. In October 1943, after eight weeks Air Combat Training school at Scott AFB, Ill, and Dlelhart AFB, Texas, Woody was assigned as a gunner and aerial engineer to the 384th Heavy Bombardment Group, Grafton Underwood RAF Station, England.

EVERETT WOODARD

On January 30, 1944, while on his ninth mission over Germany, his squadron of seven B-17's was attacked by 26 enemy fighters. Woody, a waist gunner, was hit in both legs by shrapnel from 50mm cannon. His crew mate who operated the opposite waist gun was also severely wounded. Although injured himself, Woody administered first aid to his crewmate and manned both guns.

During the attack, Sgt. Woodard was credited with destroying one enemy fighter and severely damaging another. For saving his crew mate's life and for bravery beyond the call of duty, Sgt. Woodard recieved the Silver Star and the Purple Heart. In later missions he added another enemy fighter to his list.

Sgt. Woodard spent 23 days in the hospital and nine days recuperating before he returned to flying missions. At the end of his tour, with 31 missions completed, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Goes Stateside

Returning to the states as a T-Sgt. in October 1944, Woody was Stationed at Liberal AFB, Kansas, as a heavy equipment operator.

In September, 1945, he was discharged and went to work as a tractor trailer driver. In 1947, Sgt. Woodard re-enlisted at Denver, Col., as a S-Sgt. and was assingned to Geiger Field, in Washington as a transportation supervisor.

Overseas Again

In 1948, he was sent to Johnson AFB, Japan. In June 1950 he returned to the states where he remained for two years until his reassignment to Weathers Field, England, in June 1950. He came back to the US and Bakalar in October, 1954.

Other awards include the Victory ETO, Occupation and Good Conduct Ribbons. Along with the Silver Star, DFC, and Purple Heart, that display of decorations is impressive in any man's book."

Farris Ivie

Farris Ivie is an East Texas native and a graduate of Wells High School. Then he was off to Texas A&M University where he graduated in 1940. Suddenly, his world changed for him and millions of others when the United States entered World War II. In early 1943 as a young lieutenant, he found himself in the jungles of the South Pacific fighting the Japanese Army. With little relief, this experience stretched out to the Summer of 1945. By then Farris Ivie was a captain in command of an infantry company in the Philippines. One is reminded of Tom Hanks in the film "Saving Private Ryan," but Mr. Ivie survived to a long and fruitful life in the East Texas.

Farris Ivie provided us with the digest of his regiment he was a part of throughout World War II.

History of the 158th Regimental Combat Team "The Bushmaster"

The 158th Infantry Regiment was born September 2, 1865, as the First Arizona Volunteer Infantry. The Regiment was drafted into Federal Service for World War I, 5 August 1917, as part of the 40th Division. Reorganization after the first World War assigned the 158th Infantry to the 45th Division.

On the 16th of September 1940, the Declaration of the National Emergency, the 158th Infantry joined its parent organization, the 45th Division at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. They trained for five months, moving to camp Barkley at Abilene, Texas, February 28, 1941.

Following December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor, the 158th Infantry Regiment was removed from the 45th Division, becoming a separated Regiment. January 1942 found the Regiment embarking for the Panama Canal Zone.

It was in Panama where they trained in jungle-fighting skills. The regiment took the name of the Bushmasters after the deadly bushmaster snake, which became the distinguishing shoulder patch of the fighting 158th Regiment Combat Team. The name of Bushmaster became well-known through the Nation's press.

General MacArthur, himself, personally selected and requested that the

Bushmaster be sent to his command in the Southwest Pacific Theater. They were on their way to Australia by the 2nd of January 1943, landing two weeks later at Brisbane, Queensland.

When General Walter Krueger's headquarters moved to Milne Bay and on to Goodenough Island, the 2nd Battalion, 158th Infantry became the security force for his headquarters.

On Christmas day 1943 Safford's company G embarked for Arawe. It was there that the 158th Infantry had its' Baptism of fire.' A short time later, the remainder of the 2nd Battalion arrived under command of LTC Frederick R. Stofft of Tucson, Arizona.

The landing on Wakde-Sarmi in dutch New Guinea, where from 17 May to 12 June 1944, they found the Japanese 6th Tiger Marine Division. The Regiment traded 77 officers and men for 3000 of the enemy. They were relieved on 12 June by the 6th Infantry Division (which spoke well for the regiment, as it took an entire division to replace them).

With only a brief rest, on the morning of 2 July, the Regiment went ashore at Noemfoor with the mission to destroy the enemy and construct an airstrip that would handle B-29 bombers. Fifteen days later, the mission was accomplished and General MacArthur landed on the newly constructed B-29 airdrome.

The battle at Lingayen Gulf where the Japanese invaded the Philippines 3 years earlier. Here, Company G from Safford, Arizona was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for their action in capturing the 14-inch coast gun which was bringing heavy fire on the invasion force. By the end of the operation on 27 January, 100 Japanese field pieces had been captured or destroyed. General MacArthur "had returned."

April 1st, Easter Sunday 1945, the 158th Infantry invaded the Bicol Peninsula in southern Luzon. The Regiment hit the Legaspi Port in a magnificent assault landing with Naval landing craft.

After being relieved by divisions in campaign across the Pacific, the 158th Infantry was selected to spearhead the final invasion of Japan. The Bushmasters were under orders to proceed two days ahead of America's crushing D-Day, to silence Japanese air warning stations south of Kyushu.

Timely capitulation of Japan saved the 158th Infantry from what many believed would have been a certain suicide mission. On October 13, 1945, the 158th Infantry landed in Yokohama, Japan. The great odyssey was over. **FROM ARIZONA TO JAPAN - IN FIVE YEARS!** Members were then shipped home, and the 158th Infantry was deactivated at Utsunomiya, Japan on January 17, 1946.

FARRIS IVIE'S STORY

I was born at Forest, Texas, which is a little community in Cherokee County, in December of 1917, and I finished grade school at Forest School. There wasn't a high school there. There were very few in the first few grades. I went to Wells to finish out my schooling, and I graduated from Wells High School in 1936 as valedictorian. There was a history teacher who corrected some of my grades when they got to the office. He straightened it out, and I was very happy. It was a small country school, so I didn't have any background in science or anything like that. I took some agricultural courses in place of science and biology.

My folks and my agricultural teacher, Louis B. Taylor, decided that I was going to go to Texas A&M. We always called my agricultural teacher "Bull" because his middle name started with a "B". He was from over around Center. A lot of our teachers were from that area, around Nacogdoches and Douglass. The superintendent was from Douglass, and his wife was from Nacogdoches. He wasn't only the superintendent, but he was also the basketball coach. We didn't have many sports over there except basketball. When I was there, we always had a good basketball team. I never really thought about going to college. My two older brothers were on the farm. They went to High School. They also got married real quick. They married sisters.

My parents and my Ag teacher decided I was going to A&M. I didn't even know what A&M meant or where it was. I had only been out of the county a few times. I had been to Tyler a couple of times, but that was close to home. In 1936 I did go to Dallas to the World Fair. A bunch of us Ag boys went up there as a group.

I just thought I'd go to work somewhere, but they took me and I enrolled in Texas A&M. Being from the country, I didn't know what to do, didn't know anybody, and didn't know where to go. So I just found me a room and set my stuff down and went to register. When I got down there, they asked me where I wanted to stay. I told them that I'd just got myself a room up in Hart Hall. So they assigned me to it. It happened to be in the dormitory for the Infantry. Of course, the R.O.T.C. covered all the branches of the army. I didn't even begin to think far ahead, for that was 1936, and you didn't see all of this handwriting on the wall then that war was coming. When I went down to register, I remembered that Mr. Heaton was the registrar at A&M at the time. I wasn't sure if he was kin to all the Heaton's down in Gary. I never really got to know him that well. The President of the College at the time was T.O. Walton. He was raised at Clayton. In fact, there is a Walton Cemetery at Clayton. He was good, but he was strict. I remember that first year there were some people who were dissatisfied, and they were going to protest. All of us were out there watching when he came out on the balcony and blew a loud horn. He told them they had ten minutes to get back to the rooms or they were on their way home. That broke the protest. That's what it takes, is someone to be strict on young people.

I had a hard time. I was trying to play basketball because I thought I was a really good player in high school. But when I started playing with those guys, I realized that I shouldn't be playing. On December 1, they called me into the Dean's office and told me they were going to send me home because my grades were too bad. Being myself, I said, "Being the Valedictorian of my class, that was a real let down." So I talked to the Dean and asked him to give me another chance to get my grades up to passing by midterm. He agreed to that, so I started working harder on my studies. I spent a lot more time on my work, and I did improve my grades by barely passing at midterm. I found what they really wanted. I was taking some classes that I didn't have to. One of the require-

ments was Freshman Chemistry. In order to graduate from A&M, you have to have it. I passed it, gritting my teeth together. There was one old boy in that class and his name was I.J. Irving. He was from out of Horton, Texas. In his senior year he still had not passed it and he had to go to another college to pass freshman chemistry. Last time I heard from him, he was county judge down there. I've had lots of friends.

Of course I'd thought that I'd get a job and everything would be alright. I already had a reserve commission as a second lieutenant. I went to Camp Bullis right outside of San Antonio. I graduated from there, but hadn't any prospect of a job. One Saturday at A&M, I had some time off, and they were giving civil service exams close to the building I was staying in. So I just went in there and took it to see how I would do it. I got a letter from Washington, DC, saying I could come up there and work in the Commerce Department. I went up there and helped do all the records. I was doing the work on the census, and all the other guys were just putting the cards in the slots. I was in Washington when Pearl Harbor was attacked December 7, 1941. I had been up there pestering the people where I worked about the draft that had just started. They wanted to know my draft number, but I told them I wasn't crazy; I didn't register for the draft.

On February 2, 1942, I received orders to report to Camp Wheeler in Georgia, and I reported there, and it was a training station. New recruits came in, and they would train them and ship them out where they needed replacements. I was proud to be there and not fighting. Then I got an order to report to New Orleans, LA. I didn't know what was going to happen. Then they told me that I was going to be shipped to Germany or Europe of somewhere over there. That was going to be cold, so I needed a big overcoat and good warm clothes. I was sent with 158 other men to New Orleans.

That's when I ran into two boys. One was from West Virginia, and the other was from Wisconsin. We got on a boat in New Orleans together. J.B. Whitten was my best friend and my running buddy while we were in the service. We both ended up in the "G" Company of the 158th Infantry Regiment. Later, he got promoted up to S-2, information officer. But he was still right there, handy every time I turned around. We always went to town together. For almost a year we were in Panama training for jungle fighting and learning how to clear out places. Our emblem that they put on our shoulder was a machete with a snake wrapped around it. They told us that the bushmaster was the largest and most poisonous snake anywhere in the Americas. So we had to look out for them in Panama.

The 158th Infantry Regiment was sent to the South Pacific. It was a regimental combat team. It stayed that way all during the war. It was like we were attached to one division, but most of the fighting was on our own. We had our own artillery and medical outfits. We had transportation, trucks and things to move us. Of course we were a separate unit all the way through. When we got on the ship, we didn't know where we were going. We landed at Brisbane, Australia. They sent us up in the hills about 20 or 30 miles out in the country. I never saw so many mosquitos in my life. You could rake them off any place on your body by the handfuls.

We weren't there but about a month, and the Japs were getting close to Australia. We went to Port Moresby in southern New Guinea in the first part of 1943. We stayed there for awhile and got settled, and then we moved north without any resistance. We went to a little island called Goodenough Island. They thought that there might be Japs there. So we had to go over there to clear it out to protect the other people on the main shore. We didn't have any hard fighting there. It didn't take any time there.

We went on further up, just a short way from New Britain Island. The 112th Calvary was over in New Britain and having a heck of a fight over there. They called for reinforcements and our 2nd Battalion went. One day they put us on PT Boats and carried us up there for a short while. We camped there where we waited until the next morning because we got there late. The Japs called on us that night because we got an air-raid. That's when a boy from Fort Worth got both of his legs blown off. I picked him up and carried him to the hospital. About two weeks later, he was told that he didn't have any legs, and he asked the doctor about his sex life. The doctor told him that was alright. He later came to Carthage one day to see me. He went back and ran for state legislature, and they had to build a ramp so he could get into the legislature. He didn't stay too long. I think he got killed chasing some other man's wife.

The fight in New Britain was a hard one. It was the first time I was reported dead. They had more than we had. So we had to pull back. I got a shot just right over my head. I could hear it pop. I just fell down and stayed there for about two hours because I knew that a sniper had me in his sight, and if I moved he was going to get me. So later on, I eased back out of there. When I came out, old Whitten was down there waiting for me and started crying because he thought I was dead. I told him it was just a false alarm.

We couldn't break through the Japanese lines. Colonel Stoff, the commanding officer, had been General Kruger's aide at one time. He called back to General Kruger. He was next in command to him. He called to see if he could get some tanks up there, so he could get some help. All he could promise was two. The next morning we looked out, and all we could see was five Marine tanks. People thought they should cross that river there. It was a river that had so many crocodiles in it that you could probably walk across the river on them.

One friend from that time came to visit me twice in Carthage. He is from Indiana, and he was the platoon sergeant. He took his platoon above the rocks to where he wasn't supposed to have gone. We busted him back to private, and three months later, he was promoted by a battlefield promotion to second lieutenant, which was very unusual. He was a fighter. He would grab two Japs and pop their heads together and kill them. Two of his brothers were killed in the war, so they sent him a note and told him to go back home and not go back because he was the only surviving son. The rule was if you had two sons and one died, then the other had to go home. He stayed in the States till the war was over.

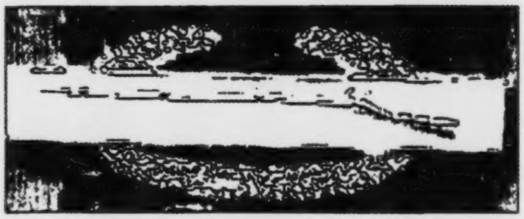
We fought there and then went to Wadke and Sarmi. Sarmi was on the mainland of New Guinea. That's where we ran into our really bad fighting. We stayed there for twenty-five days and nights without changing our socks. The Japs got so close, from here to that door (6 feet). A Japanese officer got so close to us that when the man with me shot him, his sword fell in the hole with us. He got the officer's sword, but he later gave me back the sword, but I had no use for it. Somebody stole it out of my bag on the way home. It was one of those fancy swords with the pearls on the handle of it. We finally got relief there that pulled us out of a bind, and they got another division to come in there and clean it up. We found out that there was a Japanese army of 55,000 instead of 5,000; that's when we were fighting during the 25 days.

They were going to bury a lot of the Japs killed there. I told them to get a bulldozer up there and dig a hole. So they did, and we put piano wire on them and dragged them to the hole and pushed them in. A couple of boys went out there and said, "Let us show you how to do that." They would get a pick axe and stick it in their stomach and drag them over.

I pulled out of there and went to Noemfoor Island. On the way up there, we heard Tokyo Rose. She was propaganda voice for the Japanese. She said, "The 158th Infantry, (The Bloody Butcher Of The South Pacific) were on their way to Noemfoor Island. They will land at eight o'clock, on July 2nd." I think we landed about five miles up the beach from where we were supposed to be. There was a strong coral reef there. There were amphibious vehicles called "alligators" and "ducks" that would just run us up to the fighting. We went in behind the Japs. They were facing the water when we just came up and mopped them up something awful. We lost 170 men and killed over 3000 Japs. It was a massacre. We took the island so the B-29's could take off and go to Tokyo and then come back. They wouldn't have to be refueled in the air. That way they could make a round trip to Japan. They wanted to bomb Japan while we were in the Philippines, when we got enough air force to do it.

From Noemfoor, we went in to the Philippines. We landed there just two days after the initial landing. The big bunch went in two days before we did, and we went in there and went north in the Philippines to try to clear out the Japs that way. That was our part. We were attached to the 42nd division, and we went up there, and that's when we got into the bad fighting. We captured some really big guns and got a Presidential citation for it. It was a mountainous area and we were to take the ridges. One was "Red Ridge," the "Blue Ridge," and the other was called "the Amber Ridge." We asked the general why they called it the Amber Ridge. He said, "Well, I read a book called Forever Amber, and it was the dirtiest book I've ever read." He said, "That was the dirtiest ridge I had ever seen."

I saw something in the Philippines that I hope I never see again. A bunch of our men volunteered to go after a camp where American prisoners were being held by the Japs going back to 1942. The Japs had made the prisoners walk all the way to where they were up north on Luzon from Battaan, and would not



THE COMBAT INFANTRY BADGE.

give them anything to eat on the way. It has been called "the Bataan Death March."

A friend of mine from Houston volunteered to go up there. All they gave him was a knife, not any guns or any other weapons. They snuck up behind the guards and wrapped a wire around their throat real quick so he couldn't holler, or use their knife. They got one after another and got the guards out of the way and got all the men out. You couldn't help but cry. They were in such bad shape. I don't think anybody could treat people like that. Of course that was one of the hardest things. I mean they put them down. That was against any rule.

I was wounded, nothing major anyway. I didn't get any decorations. I could have gotten a Bronze Star, but I didn't. The only real decoration that I am proud of is the Combat Infantry Badge. I've got it on in that picture, and that is the only one I am proud of. That's the only one that amounted to me. I was bad shape; I had that Tropical Malaria. I was pretty well shook up. Of course I wasn't myself when I came out of there. I am lucky. Well, the Good Lord has been good to me and brought me through alive.

In the Philippines we saw a lot of war. We went into a place called Batangas. There was a Catholic Church there. We went there, and I saw where one time those Japanese had rounded up all the people from the town. They were collected at the Catholic Church and just went in there. The Japs blocked them in where they couldn't get out. They murdered everyone of them, because they mistreated them every-which-a-way in the world. They were mean to them. I remember on time, we were in combat, and I looked and saw about half a dozen Japs running across the field. They ran into a building down there. I said to the men, "Well, that thing is full of them. Let's see what we can do with them." We put enough fire in there so that there wasn't any of them left. When we went in there, there was also a woman and a little child in that building, too. Of course, we didn't know that until we went in there to see what it was. That hurt me as much as anything. Of course, war is hell. There was one big general who said, "War is hell." And it was hell!

We were in that fighting for a good long while, two or three months, I guess. They then decided that the fighting had quieted down enough so that they could pull us out. We were still losing men all this time, and it was pitiful. At this time they had run out of company commanders. I had been in Company G all this time. After they ran out of company commanders, they asked me to take Company F. I said, "I'll take Company F if you'll put that other bar on my shoulder." I'd had just that one silver bar as a first lieutenant. I said, "I want that second bar which is a captain." They said, "Well, we'll OK it, we'll do it." So I took over F Company. The F Company was originally an all Indian company. A lot of them had gone and a lot of replacements had come in, and it was just mingled. They were fighters; I guarantee they were fighters.

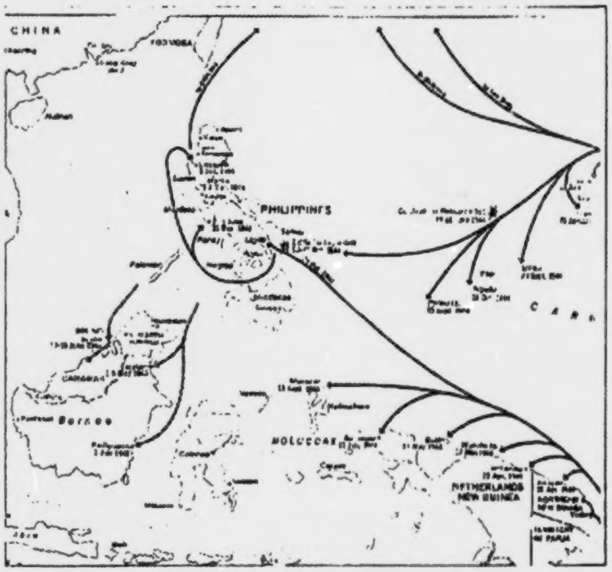
We were still in the Batangas area. We were trying to clean them out down there, and we said, "Oh well, I guess the war is over with." But that wasn't true yet. They pulled us out, loaded us on a ship, boats rather, those little old landing boats. They took us south to the end of Luzon. On April 1, 1945, we landed at Legaspi on the southern tip of Luzon.

That was the first time since I'd been over there for all time that my folks knew where I was. They had a friend in Houston where they were living at the time. They'd moved from the farm to Houston during the war. My dad was taking care of Jefferson's Stadium where the Oilers used to play football. The University of Houston was close by. We had some friends who were listening to the radio one night about midnight. The news announcer said, "Captain Farris Ivie had led his troops ashore at Legaspi on southern Luzon, and moved north to wipe out the Japanese that were there." They called my folks and told them where I was.

My kid brother was shipped out to the Philippines at the end of the war. He was in an area further north in the Luzon. We passed each other, but we never did even know where either one of us was until we got back home.

We fought the Japanese in southern Luzon until the war was over. Back when we were there in the jungles, we were guarding General MacArthur's camp. This was earlier in the war. The general walked out on his porch and he saw me. He said, "Come on over here lieutenant, I want to talk to you." So I went over there and introduced myself as Farris Ivie of Company G of the 158th Infantry Regiment. Well, we shook hands and he said, "Well, I think you are doing a wonderful job." He also said, "We are going to take the Philippines back." That was back when we were in New Guinea. That was the only time I saw him in my life. Then when we were fighting there on the Luzon, it was rough. We even captured a stationary gun whose barrel must have had a 12 inch diameter. Its shell sounded like a freight train going through the air. They just got up and left the thing, and we captured it. They were moving away from all our fire power. We had a hard time there.

In fact, we were pretty much under fire every day. One day I looked up, and I saw something that was going on which was unusual. I looked and there



FARRIS IVIE'S WARPATH.

was General MacArthur. He called me over and I went over and saluted him. He said, "I want to see Lieutenant Peterson." Lt. Peterson was one of my officers at that time. So I sent a runner over there to go tell Lieutenant Peterson to report as General MacArthur wanted to see him. He wondered what he had done and make tracks to report. General MacArthur got out of his jeep and saluted the lieutenant and said, "I came here for one purpose and that's to pin a Silver Star an you. That's for blowing up that depot with all that ammunition and such up there in northern Luzon." What really amazed me from this event was that General MacArthur remembered my name from a single meeting before and addressed me as, "Captain Ivie."

One day in the jungle I was talking to a friend, and I heard a "POP." I looked over there, and he was grabbing his hand, the webbing on his right hand by his thumb. It had a hole straight through it as a bullet had hit it. He was just looking at it, and I hit him in the back of the knees and knocked him to the ground. When I did - "BOOM" - I heard another shot go right where we had been standing. The sniper had us in his sights, and we were having a hard time. However, we got out of that tight scrap and got him to an aid station.

Another time I looked over there on another ridge, and I saw three pill boxes made out of coconut logs. They were fortified positions which had an opening to shoot out at us with a variety of weapons across that ridge. One of my men was the best with mortar I ever saw. I can't even remember his name now. He was on the 81mm mortar which had just over a three inch diameter shell.

Well I called him up to me, and I said, "Sergeant, you see those boxes over there? See what you can do with them." He set that dang mortar up and dropped one round and missed the pill boxes by a little bit. Next shot he got one right on top of that pill box. He said, "I don't see anything happening." Well, I said, "Try a delayed action fuse round. "We had them in mortar shells that penetrated something first to explode on contact. When it hit those coconut log.

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When it went off, you couldn't see anything by arms, legs, and coconut trees going up in the air.

There were three of the pill boxes. I said, "Get every one of them." He got all three of them, and said, "What now, Cap?" I replied, "Just leave the mortar where it is for now." He said, "What do you mean? We got them all." I again told him to leave the mortar set up where it was. Then it was getting late in the afternoon. The next morning, the Japanese had built the pill boxes back up exactly as they were. I told him, "Do it again." He laughed and said "You're smarter than anybody I ever knew. You knew they were going to build those pill boxes again, didn't you?" That's the way the Japs were. They were sneaky. They thought we wouldn't believe they'd rebuild in the same place. But he got them all again on the second time around.

The war was over with while were still fighting in the southern Luzon. I had one patrol out, and broke through the Japanese line and was mopping up there. Another patrol was out and didn't find out about the war being over because of a

broken radio. But shortly the news reached us on the atom bomb and the Japs surrendered.

We sat and waited to see what would happen next. We said, " Well since the war is over, we can go home now on a good boat or plane." We stayed put though and were sent a new regimental commander. He wanted us to go on to Japan as he was fresh overseas and hadn't been through all of the fighting. So he would not send any of us home until we got to Japan, where we went after the war was over.

We also got a new battalion commander, and he was out there doing close order drill and all that. One day I walked out there. He jumped all over my men because they weren't doing what they were supposed to do as to drilling. I spoke up and said, "Wait a minute colonel. You don't jump on my men like that." He said, "What do you mean?" I replied, "This is the Army. You don't start at the bottom and work up. You start at the top and come down." He threatened me with a court martial. I told him, "Go ahead." When he realized what he was doing, he backed off, then apologized. My men heard all of this. They would have died after that. They had all witnessed how I had taken up for them.

We didn't get sent home, but went to Japan as part of the occupation force there after the war. We didn't know it at the time, but if the war had continued, orders had been cut for the 158th Infantry to an island right in Tokyo Bay. We were supposed to go in at Tokyo when they invaded Japan. One of the news articles at the time said it would probably have been a suicide mission because of the military strength the Japs still had. Of course we didn't have to do that. They dropped that atomic bombs on them, and they surrendered.

We did become part of the occupation force at war's end. We landed at Yokohoma and went through Tokyo. Right now, I believe Tokyo is the second largest city in the world and modern as can be. However, when we went through, there wasn't anything there but crumpled brick and tin. Those B-29's had blown the city apart. Man, they had laid that place low. I mean they had really torn that city up.

We went on to a little town called Utsunomiya up there about 90 miles north of Tokyo. That's where we were going to be stationed. I went out for a walk one day and met and talked to an old Jap. He was a good, friendly man who spoke good English. I asked him how things were going for him. He replied, "Well, you did a job on us, and we have no hard feelings. We can't afford to because you have treated us well. You see this town here? We had a raid by those B-29's. There's a railroad track right down through the middle of town. On the right hand side of that track was an industrial center. On the left hand side was where the people lived. On a cloudy night we could hear the B-29's but couldn't see them. We don't know how they did it, but they bombed out the industrial area on one side of the track, but didn't damage the residential area on the other side with their bombs, on the side where the people lived. That's amazing they could do that, and we appreciated it. They could have murdered all of us at the same time, but they didn't do it."

FARRIS IVIE AT HOME IN RETIREMENT

We had only been there a few days when General Eichelberger, who was one of the bigshots at the time, came to visit where we were camped. He started talking to some of the men and asked them how many points they had. Points were given for service time, combat time, etc.

Of course, if you had 120 points, you were supposed to be sent home regardless. I had 120 points myself. I didn't have any wounds or anything like that. I was the only infantry officer rifle company commander who hadn't been killed or wounded that started out with the 158th Regiment when it first went into combat. They had lots of replacements, but I was the only original one left. After checking with some of the men, General Eichelberger hurried to talk with our commanding officer, Colonel Sandlin. He put his finger in his face and said. "Colonel, I'll give you 24 hours for every man in this outfit with 110 points or more to be on their way home."

I wish they had waited a couple of days, so I could have gotten a ride home by an airplane. However, they put us on a Liberty Ship, a cargo type ship. It was a slow and rough trip. We went by a northern route and landed in Tacoma, Washington. I stayed there several days and then received orders to go by train to San Antonio. When I arrived, I had a physical before getting out, and discovered my temperature was at 105 degrees. I had that tropical malaria, so they put me in the hospital there before I could get home. Of course I was in pretty bad shape. I was six feet tall at that time. That tropical malaria had really got me down.

One time the malaria was so bad that I passed out. It was when I was about to shave. When I woke up, they had me in a big vat of water filled with ice. My temperature was 108 degrees. I blacked out in the hospital, but I told them I'd rather stay in my quarters and take my medicine. They let me take it easy until I got temperature right.

I then got my discharge from the Army. My folks came down from Houston. My brothers drove them there, and also brought my future wife with them. We got to see each other, and then they went on back. I got better and moved to Houston to be with my folks. That was in December of 1945.

Fay and Farris Ivie at Loblolly's 25th Birthday Party

We got married in January 1946. I then got a job with the Department of Agriculture in Houston. We inspected fruit coming in from the Valley. They then decided they were going to send me out in the fields. I went to Hemphill, Texas, to inspect potatoes, and then went to Panola County to do the same thing. I moved on the Arkansas and then on to the Macon, Georgia area. The next year my wife's mother was sick here, and my wife wanted to care for her. So it seemed like the time to quit work for the government and all the travel it involved. Carthage seemed like a good place to live, and we've been here ever since.

Jack Harris

We first heard of Jack Harris from our friend Susan Metcalf Calomino, now living in Chicago but a native of Beckville, Texas. She is involved in a history of Beckville book with her mother and sister and shared his name with us.

We found Jack Harris to be a fascinating individual. In 1943 at the age of 16, in the midst of World War II, he joined the army. He quickly found himself in training in England as a member of an elite combat group-"The Night Raiders." From there he went to France on D-Day on June 6, 1944. The following months were exciting and dramatic as Jack Harris experienced combat against the Germans at close quarters. He was recommended for the Medal of Honor two times, but the award never came to him. However, he ended up the war as a highly decorated combat veteran who had survived against incredible odds.

Following World War II, Jack Harris returned home to Beckville to a much different life. Since 1956 he has been a pastor of the Pine Grove Assembly Church. He and his wife, Bobbie, married 52 years, are the parents of five children, and have a bonus of 14 grandchildren. It's been quite a life.

I was born at Beckville, Texas. I was born about three miles from town west of Beckville. I went to school in Beckville when I was growing up. Except for World War II, I have lived here. I'm still here with my wife. We have five children and 14 grandchildren.

When I was 16 (my birth record said 17), I joined the Army in 1943. I volunteered for a special unit which involved being a paratrooper, and you had to be six feet tall. When we got the chance to volunteer, they tried to talk us out of it, telling us how rough it would be. It turned out they were right.

I went directly to England and did all my training there. It started when I went into the army, and they took me to Camp Walters. When I got off the bus, they were having a meeting. These folks had come in there and were looking for some big men. They said this was the quickest way to get into the war. That's what I came for, so I volunteered. You had to be at least six feet tall and not over six feet and four inches. You had to weigh between two and a half and three pounds per inch. That's a big man.

I was a big old boy, so I volunteered. They sent us right to England. Most of them that volunteered had already been trained and came there from all over the United States. So I was one of the first volunteers. They tried to talk us out of it, but I figured that's what I came for was to get with it.

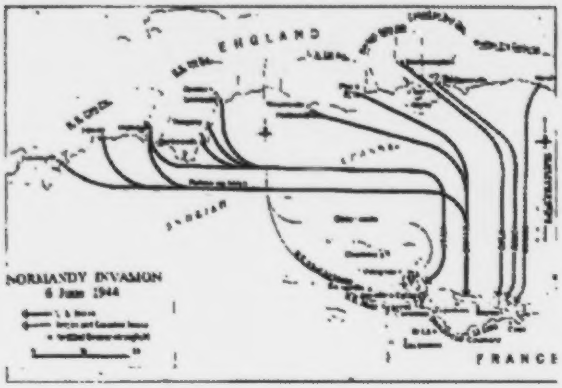
When they pulled us together to make this special unit, we were all just about from everywhere. They just told us to fall in out there. The company commander, he was an Army man, as was the first sergeant. They were the only Army there were. The rest of us were just recruits. The company commander walked up to me and said, "Soldier, you look like a platoon sergeant." I replied, "Well, whatever you say, sir." He then told me, "Fall out over here." Then he went through and picked out others like that.

Jack Harris

He made me a platoon sergeant right on the spot, and I hadn't been in the Army for two weeks. My rank was staff sergeant. The Table of Organization (T.O.) called for that rank for that job. Then a month later the T.O. was changed and called for a technical sergeant and I moved up again. Then the first sergeant retired. The company commander chose me to replace the first sergeant. Hey, I'd been in the Army for about three months now, and I'm the first sergeant. That's the way it was there, but it doesn't work that way normally. Others were quickly made corporals. It was kind of a reward for being on a tough road in the special Night Raiders unit.

Jack Harris

We went directly to England and trained for 13 months. It was really rigid training. We learned a little of the German language so we would be able to communicate better. During that 13 months I made three trips into occupied France. They were called "secret missions," and they were to a great extent. We just went there to make contact with some French Resistance people. They were sympathetic to us. Later during the liberation of France, we would thus know how to make contact with them. Only one of these three was a combat mission to France. The mission was to just go in there and hit a unit. We knew where it was, and we just hit them hard and got out quickly. "Harass them," was the title, and we did that. Then we continued to train, and part of that was out in the English Channel. We knew we'd be by boat, but maybe by air. We trained to do it either way.



JACK HARRIS - WITH THE 29TH DIVISION - FROM ENGLAND TO OMAHA BEACH ON D-DAY. HIS 116TH REGIMENT SUFFERED THE GREATEST LOSSES.

I was in one of these maneuvers and on a ship out there in the channel. We ran into some German E-boats and lost 800 men. The Army denied it ever happened until about four years ago. There were rumors floating around. The Army threatened us with everything you could threaten a man with if we sat and talked about it among ourselves. What they did, they covered that up like they do so much now, but it was kind of new then, I think.

They knew that the invasion was imminent, so they just kept them on the roster until D-Day. Then they took abut two thirds of them out that day like they'd been killed during the invasion of France. A week later they phased out a few more until they wrote off the whole 800. About four years ago, the government admitted they lost these men to German E-Boats. We were out there on those boats and didn't have any kind of live ammunition. We were just out there playing soldier, and the Germans weren't playing. They were there with submarines and live ammunition. They tore us up. Fortunately for me, I was not right where the attack came. I was on the outer edge and got away along with some lucky others.

We continued to train until just before D-Day. There is a picture of me in the English Channel on a Landing Craft Infantry boat. The front end of the boat has ramps which let down and is supposed to run you go up on the beach. You just walk down the ramp on the beach. However, the Germans were defending the beach, so we couldn't run up near to the beach. The boats let you off way out in the water, and then you had to wade to the beach. When you waded to the beach, and if you got there, you knew most of the other guys had gotten killed at Omaha Beach. That's where we landed on D-Day.

I think we made a lot of mistakes. Nothing was right. Everything was wrong. It was just our time to win. We were as unorganized as you could even imagine. One thing was our packs. The stuff we carried got in your way. They had equipment all up top in the pack like bandoliers of ammunition. You also

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had a belt around your waist which stayed on with the pack harness over it. The belt had a cylinder in there. If you jumped out in the water over your head, you squeezed the belt buckle, and it punched the cylinder and inflated your belt like it was a life preserver.

I think the problem was we were top heavy. Once you inflated that belt, your head went down and feet went up with all that equipment. You couldn't get out of it and you were going to drown. I saw hundreds of them floating out across there in the water with their feet up. Well, of course, I saw what was happening right away, so I didn't inflate mine. Had I not known that, I would have inflated mine, but I didn't. So that's what saved me there.

I was with this man who was portrayed on the movie, "Saving Private Ryan" and also on the D-Day picture, "The Longest Day." They sent me a tape of the first one before they released it and wanted my comments on it. That man I was in the war with there claims to be the first solider wounded on D-Day. His name is Slaughter. He's still alive and does a lot of veterans work. He was a personal friend of mine. Somebody asked me, "Was old Jim really the first one?" I said, "Well, no one can actually dispute it or confirm it." I mean the Germans were blasting away at us coming and going. He got shot alright before he got to the sea wall beyond the beach. The shooting was going on like gang busters, and they were killing men by the dozens. So with all that confusion, nobody can know. So if he wants to make that claim, it's alright with me.

I didn't get a scratch there. I was with the 29th Division, but I was with the Night Raiders. We were a special unit attached to the 29th. We were similar to the Rangers but we were better trained. We were the best trained unit in the whole United States Army according to General Omar Bradley. It was Bradley's idea to create the Night Raiders.

We had a special job for the D-Day. That was to take out the German's big guns covering the beach. We were successful in that objective even though we suffered very high casualties. We did inflict even higher casualties on the enemy. When you come up on the beach from the water, you know the tide is coming in. So when you come up out of the water on the beach, there's a wall, oh, maybe, a hundred yards away. It's about three feet high. It makes a good cover from the machine guns, and if you could get to the wall, you could relax for a few minutes. Getting to the wall was the main thing.

General Eisenhower came in the next day, and he said he was astounded to look down on the beach as far and as wide as you could see it. He said there wasn't any place to put your feet without stepping on a dead man. When the tide went out, it took some of them back to sea. If you got wounded that day, it could be just as bad because there wasn't anyway to get out. If you got wounded where you couldn't move, well, there were bullets still coming, so you're just going to get killed. That's why the ratio there that day was of six or seven wounded, one lived. Normally it should have been about three to one recovery from wounds. It is better that in modern wars because they swoop in with helicopters and get them out.

Now, let's go back to D-Day. I got off the beach, and when I had time, I had to do a headcount for my unit. We had come in with 220 men. I was First Sergeant; the first headcount I made was 39 men. This was just after dark on D-Day. We got in about a mile inland, and the rest of them were on the beach. I think they said we had about 82% casualty ratio. I talked to General Bradley about it, and he asked he how I was coming along. I replied I was doing pretty well or alright. He then told me he was afraid I would be a little depressed, which I really was with the high casualty rate. But the general then tried to cheer me up by saying they had expected a 95% casualty rate for my unit. It was still a sad day to have lost so many friends. They had been the only people I had really gotten to know in the military. We had trained together for 13 months, both day and night. We didn't have any holidays. We knew each other like brothers, and it was hard to lose them like that.

After that they sent us replacements. We'd lose most of them the same day we got them, or the next day. They weren't trained nearly as well as we were to be members of an elite unit that would face Hitler's fanatics in SS units. On one occasion the Germans were going to air drop some SS troops. Our intelligence found out where and when this was to happen. They then got us in ahead of them without others knowing we were there. That gave us a great advantage.

The officer who created the mission talked to us about it. He told us that these SS troopers thought it a great honor to get killed. They would just purposely run at you and get killed. So, if a fellow is willing to kill himself, then he's dangerous. The officer asked me, "What are you going to do, Sarg?" I said, "Well, I'm gonna get out there, and if you get me out there, then I'm gonna make as many of them happy as I can." Sure enough, they didn't know we were there waiting on the ground. They came in, and we tore them up. It wasn't a contest, it was a massacre. That's all there was to it. They never did get set to fight as they landed under fire.

I've had that happen to me, too. One of the times I got shot, that's what happened to me. We were in Germany at that time just after the Battle of the Bulge. I just hit the ground from my jump after leaving the plane. I knew I was in trouble before I hit the ground because I saw them shooting at us coming down. So I unbuckled everything and got ready so I could get it all off as quick as I landed. I did that but hit the ground within a few feet of a German machine gun. He was dug in the middle of the street with a net thrown over it for camouflage. I didn't see it until he started shooting.

I had a Thompson submachine gun on a strap. I got it ready to use on the group. I was headed toward that machine gun nest, but didn't know he was there. He was watching me all the time, and what he was waiting for was I had about five men about half a block back of me. He saw them too, and he hoped I wouldn't run over him before they caught up to me so he could shoot us all. But he saw that I was just gonna keep coming. He fired, and the first shot hit my arm and busted it as well as hitting the Thompson submachine gun. I had a funny sensation. So I looked around me and saw the gun shooting up the street. The bullets sped out for it was a German MG 42. I had a 45 pistol, and by this time I got it out and ready to go. By now I'd seen him, so I headed for the machine gun with my pistol in hand firing as I went. Fortunately for me, I hit the gunner, I guess, with the first shot. Instead of knocking him backwards, he fell over the gun. That was lucky for me, for that gesture fixed it where the other four men couldn't get to the gun. I kept coming and shooting.

I just dived into the hole when I got there, but I had been shot in the arms and both legs. I was hurt really badly, and the other men hollered at me. Well, actually about this time the German shot me. One man behind me yelled, "Look out, Harris." I thought there must be a sniper coming out between me and them. So I was in the process of whirling in his direction, and that's when they hit my submachine gun. So when I got in the hole there, they hollered and called me, and I answered them. They said, "You're hit aren't you?" I replied, "Yeah," They asked, "Where are you hit?" I told them, "I don't know, I'm kind of hit all over." They said, "We're going to come up and get you." And they did.

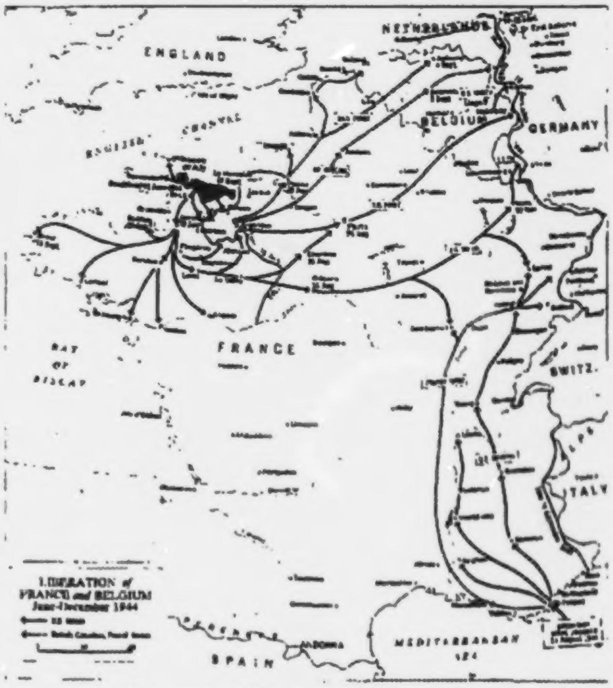
They came up and got me alright. They got me out of the hole, and there were six of us now around the hole. The Germans decided to make a break for it. A couple of them ran and got away from the machine gun nest. They ran around the corner; they shot into us again. They hit all these other men and knocked them all down. Now, we're all down and they just kept coming. They were on the attack now coming through that little town. They thought we were all dead, so they just bypassed us to meet another larger group.

Then everything got quiet. I said, "Any of you men alive?" Well, yeah, we took a roll call, and all of them were alive but wounded. One was hit really badly. So I said, "Well, can any of you navigate?" One guy said, "I can get around alright." I replied, "See if you can find us a place where we can take cover." He found a cellar right under the building there. We were right in front of it.

I asked, "Can you get us down in there?" He did. I think maybe one or two of them were already dead by the time we got them down in there. Two more of them died, and then this other man and myself were the only ones left alive. He had been hit several times, but he didn't have any broken bones. They were just flesh wounds.

One morning came, and we had been in that cellar three days and nights. I heard some rifles firing. The other man wasn't as experienced in combat as I was. He had come in as a replacement, but he was a good man. I asked, "You hear that rifle fire?" He replied, "Yes." I said, "Well, those aren't German rifles." He asked it I thought they were Americans. I said, "No, I think it's English, but that's just as good. Go outside, and if you get a chance, go get their attention and they'll help us." He did, and they did. They got us out of there.

They took me off and put me in an English hospital in Birmingham, England. I stayed there almost a year. That was the end of the war for me. It was practically the end of the war for all of us. After the Battle of the Bulge, the Germans didn't have a mind to fight anymore. It was just a matter of waiting for the big shots to get together and negotiate some surrender terms.



JACK HARRIS'S WAR

I had fought in France, Belgium, Luxemburg, Holland, and Germany. I went all across western Europe. I was in the 29th Division, with this special unit, the Night Raiders they called us. I was the First Sergeant of my company. That job was to be responsible for the men, and keep the records on and see that was done. He's the top man. Well, of course, you've got your company commander, but he leaves it up to the First Sergeant. He lets you take care for everything including combat.

My highest combat decoration was the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC).

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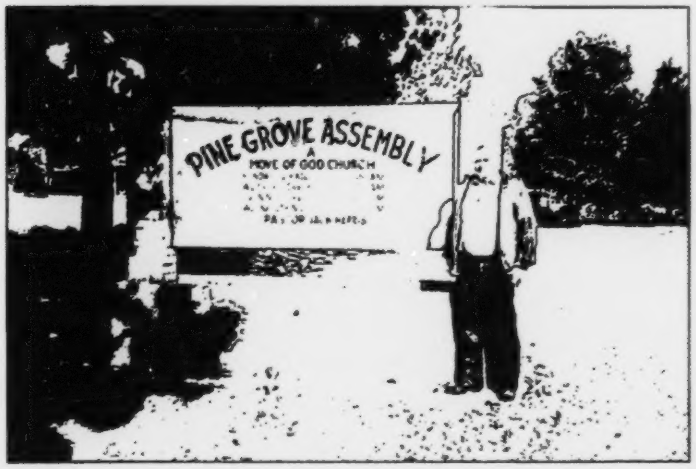
We were in France. I wiped out a German command post of nine by myself. I also received their Croix de Guerre which is their highest medal. In England I was given their Military Order of Merit medal. It's also a high decoration equivalent to our Silver Star. To get this medal, you have to put your life on the line, and it has to be under fire. You're especially on the line for some cause. I was awarded three Silver Star decorations from the U.S. Army. I won the first one in France just after the D-Day invasion. Then I got one for action near Brest, France, and the last one in Germany. I also received three U.S. Army Bronze Stars which ranks just below the Silver Star. And I received three Purple Heart medals for wounds in action. I was also given a "Battle Field Commission" to the rank of First Lieutenant which is a recognition for leadership. This was just before D-Day. The company commander was killed, and we only had four second lieutenants as officers in the company. They had just arrived and hadn't really been trained right. So General Bradley asked me if I'd lead the company. I said, "Well, hey, General, I had every intention of doing so." You know I was saying that as a joke. He made me a First Lieutenant and the company commander. However, I got wounded on July 12, 1944. When I got back to the hospital , I resigned my commission and went back to being First Sergeant. I liked the job better, and the pay was better for me, too.

I made five combat jumps on paratrooper assignments. I got wounded on the last one in Germany. We did not land where we were supposed to. What happened was when we were on our way to the jump zone on a C-47 transport plane. We called them "flying box cars." They held 47 paratroopers with all their gear. We were on our way when we ran into some antiaircraft or ack-ack fire. A shell gave the plane a direct hit which went right through the cockpit. So we didn't have a choice but to get off and jump. We didn't know where we were. We were short of the target. We just needed to get off that plane. That was when I got shot. The second time I was wounded was with the SS troops and the machine gun nest. The third time was, I think, July 12 at St. Lo in France.

The Army just sent our special unit, the Night Raider, where it was hot. That's what they trained us for, and that's what they used us for. We fought all the way through like crazy. You'd go for days without sleeping or eating. Once, I went 42 days without changing socks, without pulling my shirt off. After 42 days they could probably smell you before they could see you.

The only chance of getting that grime off was when we had to cross a stream and took advantage of that. We had to scrounge for the food we ate. When we went into combat, we had about a three day supply for food. Forty-two days later it got thin. That was part of our training, survival. We survived because of our training. We were known as the Night Raiders. We were, I believe, a battalion attached to the 29th Infantry Division. We fought on the ground and on the water, anywhere. We had some of it all.



I came back to the United States in 1946, I believe in February. I went and fought in the war, and came back, and was still a teenager. I just barely made it back as a teenager, but I wasn't 20 years old yet. In my military service, I never washed a dish or pulled guard duty like most soldiers did. That's from being with the Night Raiders unit.

Well, back to where we were before. After the war I came back to Beckville. I had been raised on the farm, so I went back to the farm and farmed a little. Then I started back to church. Later in 1953 I went into ministry. I've been in the ministry ever since with the Assembly of God. I've been trying to retire ever since I was 65. I'm 72 now, but who knows, it may work out.

The church is the Pine Grove Assembly Church in Beckville. It's right on the highway. It's a good church. It's where I went to be a pastor. It's been very good to me. I've also trained a lot of pastors at the church all these years. All young preachers like to be in charge. They're glad if I take a month off and go to Europe and do some evangelistic work and let them be on their own.

Then I started ailing six or seven years ago. That's when I wanted to resign from pasturing, but I've still kept preaching. I've preached hundreds of funerals and weddings. I've taught in a lot of serminars and done revivals all over the country. I've preached in all 50 of the United States and abroard. I went right back where I fought and preached a missionary campaign. The strange thing about that is that it was 15 years after the war, and I couldn't recognize anything over there. My memory was excellent at that time. It's just that the area had been built up since the war. You know, have you ever gone back to a place where you were 20 years ago? You go back and see how it has changed. I was disappointed to see how it had changed, but you know that's the way things are.

I just continued to preach and minister, but I developed a chronic lung disease, emphysema. It's given me quite a bit of trouble. I'm an outpatient now over at Shreveport. When it doesn't bother me, I'm fit, strong. I can't get any sympathy, for I always look good. You'd think I was as healthy as an ox. I don't know how long this is going to last. You'll never get rid of it. You can't control it pretty well most of the time.

I'm still at Pine Grove Assembly Church. I still would love to retire from pastoring, and I just don't know how it will work out. I would just quit, but I'd feel like a deserter. I wouldn't want to feel like that. I think some of the folks would like me to quit, but more of them would like me to stay. So that's where I'm hung at. I haven't seen a show of hands on that.

All the kids think I'm their granddaddy, you know. I married their mommy and daddy. I married them and baptized all their children. I'm marrying a third generation now. I've really had a good life. I have a wife who's been with me all the way. I have four sons, one daughter, and 14 grandchildren. Yeah, life's been good to me.

I had good monetary success. It's been real good to me. I wore out 24 automobiles. I got them all new and drove them two years each. They weren't wore out, but they had over 100,000 miles on them. These cars now run for 300,000 miles if you take care of them. But I was traveling widely, and doing a lot of traveling from coast to coast. I just had to have a dependable automobile. So I would trade every two years. I was able to do it financially, and I liked to do it. I still do.

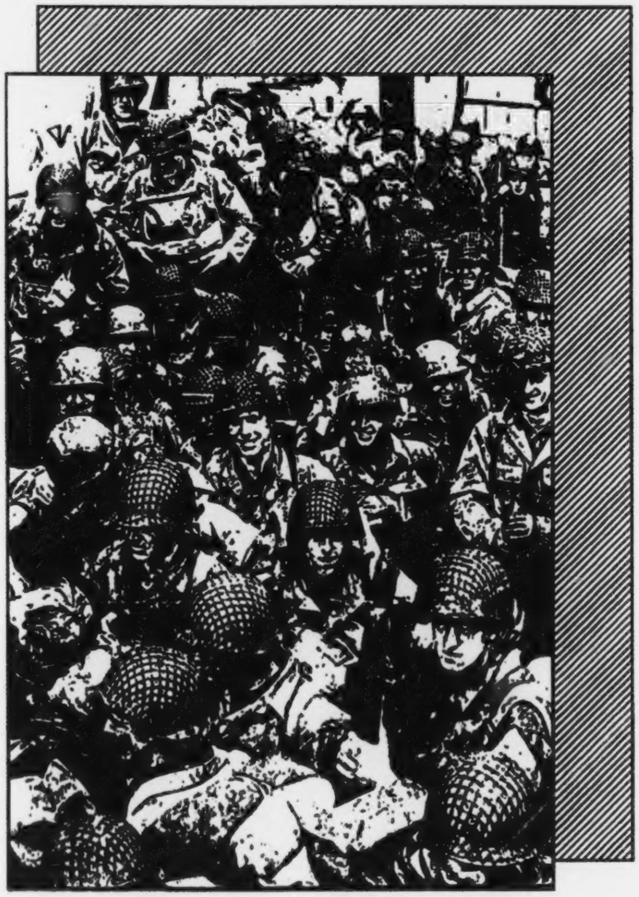
I had a farm out in the mining area. I'm also a direct descendent of Daniel Martin whose name is on Martin's Creek and Martin's Plant. He was the first settler in there. He was my great-great-granddaddy, so our roots go deep in Panola County. We've been here many generations. My granddaddy died before I was born. He had a large family. My dad had four brothers and five sisters. Twins were not a rare event, but there haven't been any recently.

That's all I know to do, it to keep driving at what's in front of me. People have always commended me on my war record. I said, "Hey, I didn't do anything if anybody got in my way. If they didn't have on the right kind of uniform, I moved them over. That's just the way you do."

I think that "Saving Private Ryan" is the most authentic war film I've ever seen. You know the fellow who claims he was the first one wounded, he really liked it also. The D-Day scenes were more realistic than anything I've ever seen. Some of it was actual footage taken on D-Day.

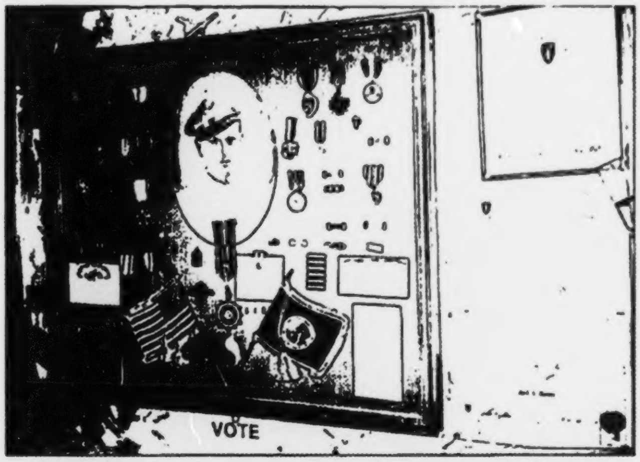
On the 50th anniversary of D-Day, I was interviewed by CBS. You might have seen me, but didn't know who I was. They ran in over this part of East

Texas because I was an East Texas man. The guy who interviewed me said, "You sure have a vivid memory of this." I said "Well, it's been 50 years ago. You can't lose 180 really, bosom friends in just two hours. You're never going to forget it." My mind isn't near as sharp as it was a few years ago. I committed all that stuff to memory that we would have to do to get into France and out. You couldn't write everything down. I could commit it to memory easily then, but I'd have a hard time doing that now. I don't have to worry about me doing that now because I'd have a hard time getting to where you do it. They knew what they were doing when they put us young guys up front.



JACK HARRIS - UPPER
LEFT CORNER -
CROSSING THE CHANNEL

The experiences of World War II and of what I went through will never leave me. I'm still restless at night and nervous. I think it goes back to being in combat when we tore up all patterns of sleep over a long period of time. You stayed awake day and night, and stayed out in weather continually. When I did this, I just messed up my program of sleep and never got it back. Once in a while I'll have a flash back in my sleep. I'll be back there and it's real. It's just like it was. My wife can calm me down. I don't do that often, but it was just a month ago when it last happened. It just never leaves you. I still think about the combat experiences. That's part of me.



Jack Harris and decorations - Distinguished Service Cross, upper left corner

THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

Now let me tell you how I won the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC). It was ,I believe, in August, 1944 and we broke out of St. Lo in France. I was on another mission and came up on the Free French who were in a fight with the Germans. I came around a hedgerow and there they were. It was a regimental command post. There was a set of officers and two enlisted men. They had a map spread out on the ground. They were planning out their tactics to hit the Free French group.

They didn't see me, so I just got back behind that hedgerow and tried to think what I was going to do about the mission that I was on. We were sent to harass the enemy. If we accomplished the mission, we had to get back the best way we could. I thought about harassing the enemy. I said to myself, "I believe I'll harass these guys." I had a Thompson submachine gun. It's a little short gun, and it has a clip in it with 30 to 50 cartridges. Mine had 30 rounds.

They had these two enlisted men. There was one posted on the left and another on the other side as guards. I quickly surveyed the situation, saw what was there. I said to myself, "Hey, I can take all of these people out before they even know I'm here." So I slipped around. I decided that was what I was going to. So I stepped around in the opening. I took the guard on the left first. Then I came across these seven officers. I cut them down just like that. By now the guard to my far right, well he'd had time to unshoulder his weapon. So he fired a shot at me, but he missed. I didn't miss. One was a full colonel, one a lieutenant colonel, a major and four captains. The two enlisted men were sergeants.

The Free French Army unit was right down there waiting. They heard all the calamity and sent a little patrol unit up there to see what happened. I saw them and got with them. They took me back with them to their company commander, and I told them what happened. He replied, "We ought to hit the Germans now that they have no leader." He asked me if I'd lead them. I said, "No, that's against military policy, but I'll go with you and stay by your side. I'll just tell you what I'd do. I'll just stand with you and help you shoot them." That's how I won the Croix de Guerre from France about the same time I was awarded the D.S.C. by our Army.

A SILVER STAR

There was a man over in Beckville that was a blacksmith. His name was Beason. He made for me, and another fellow from Beckville who was a paratrooper, a knife each. Then he mailed them to us. They were really classic. The other guy got killed right away, so I don't know what happened to his knife. He was over in the Pacific. I broke mine in a struggle fighting with a German in a machine gun nest.

We were in a terrible fix in that we were just about out of ammunition. This machine gun had us nailed down. The action took place outside Brest. We were in hedgerow country. I looked over one of the hedgerows where the earth mound was about four feet high. I could hear a German machine gun set even with me, and knew what it was.

I had a hand grenade with me. It was the last defense I had except the knife as I was out of ammunition myself. I lobbed the grenade over the hedgerow, and it exploded. I heard some hollering, so I jumped over into the nest. They were in there. The grenade hadn't killed them but had addled them pretty good. There were three of them. One of them bear hugged me pretty good. When he did, I already had the knife in my hand. I reached around and put the blade in between his shoulder blades up to the hilt. It had about a six or seven inch blade.

I tried to pull the knife because another of the Germans was getting up. He was very close. I didn't have much time to try to recover my knife. The

German was a big guy and twisted as he fell. And I held on to the handle. He broke the blade off almost to the hilt. The second fellow was up on his "all fours", so I kicked him as hard as I could on the chin with my big size 13 boot. There was a "pop" and I figured it was his neck. The third took off, and I ran after him. He ran into a hole, a cellar, and I didn't want to go in after alone, so he got away.

That enabled the company to move to a more secure position while we were almost out of ammunition. Then we were in a better place to resupply on ammunition. That was the action for which I received one of my Silver Stars.

THE SERGEANT AND THE GENERAL

On D-Day our unit suffered 82% casualties. We had 39 men left out of 220 when the landing started. General Bradley talked to me about our unit. He commended us highly and told me we did really well. He said, "When we planned on a sand table exercise before the actual invasion, we expected at least 95% casualties."

I got to know him personally. I had done him some favors, and he had done me some favors. It was unusual for a sergeant and a general to know each other. I carried some important cargo from France to his wife. I carried it from him as I was going back to London where his wife was. I believe I made three trips carrying something for her. I didn't know what it was. It was a package, sealed really good. It was waterproof and all. My instructions from him were, "Don't let this out of your hands until you put it in the hands of my wife."

This was before and after D-Day too. I carried one package before D-Day and two after. I figured it was something real important. My orders were, "Don't let them out of

AMY OWENS, JACK HARRIS AND KATY VAUGHN

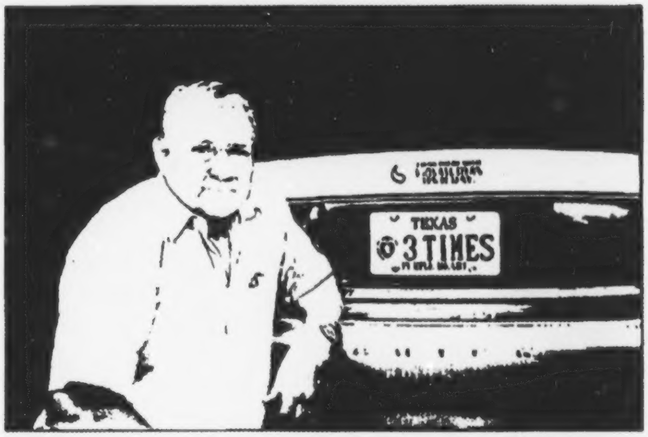
your hands." The time before D-Day was when I had come out of France. We had made a mission into France and brought back some stuff. I didn't know what it was. He presented me a package as I was getting a flight back to England, I mean London. He gave me a package and told me to put it in his wife's hands. He said, "She'll meet you. She knows what you look like. She will identify herself." She did, and I did when we met.

A sergeant and a general are usually not bosom buddies. He knew me in a crowd, and I sure knew him in a crowd. He trusted me. I first met him in England when I was going through the 13 months training. The first time I met him to shake hands with him was in a class and he asked, "Are there any Texans here?" I said, "I am." He told me, "I'd like to see you after class." He then got me an assignment or two after our first meeting.

I went into France three times before the invasion. He was the regular leader of that, so I came to personally know him from that. There were times when he'd be back in London and I'd come by. He'd take me for coffee. During those forays he'd call me Jack, but I never called him Omar. I know that he trusted me, and I know I wouldn't have betrayed that trust. I would have defended it with my life. I think he knew that.

His wife was there during the training period before the invasion. After we got to France, he could go back and forth. He was an army commander. He was over a certain number of divisions. He came out with five stars. The first time I saw him, he just had two. I always called him "a soldier's general." He'd come up through the ranks. He was a lanky tall fellow who looked like a commander. Our relationship was not a buddy thing, but I feel he knew me personally.

He made me the company commander after the one was killed. That was about three days before the invasion. The captain was killed in an accident when he got caught between two trucks. So I was the company commander at D-Day ,



JACK HARRIS - LICENSE PLATE INDICATES THREE PURPLE HEARTS FOR BATTLE WOUNDS - BUMPER STICKER TELLS THAT PVT. RYAN WAS WITH HIM ON D-DAY on June 6. Then July 12 when I was wounded and was sent back to the hospital, I resigned the commision. I went back to being First Sergeant. I liked to get right in the thick of it. The company commander usually stays back at the command post. I wanted to be where the action was. It was General Bradley who gave me the commission though. He called me and asked if I'd do it. I replied I'd do whatever he wanted. I told him I'd give it my best shot. I'd be leading them anyhow as First Sergeant.

I resigned my commission so I could go back to my original company. If I didn't resign the commission, I'd have to take another company. I'd had no experience as a company commander, but I'd had a lot of experience as First Sergeant.

JACK HARRIS - THE NIGHT RAIDERS AND D-DAY

The Night Raiders was a special unit picked out of the 29th Infantry Division. The members came from all three regiments of the 29th. There was about 1,200 of us split up into half a dozen companies. There were 200 or thereabout per company. We were trained to go into trouble by any means, by plane and parachute. We were trained in all manners of combat. We were a very special unit.

They used us before the D-Day invasion for special, some of them secret missions. Well, all of them were supposed to be secret. Some of them we made so much noise during the mission it was no longer a secret. When we were training for our specific assignments, we were training with the rest of the 29th Division. There was little difference between the two training times. We were a more select group. We were sized, that is we had a uniform appearance in general for whatever that was worth.

We were ready for any emergency, which meant we were always on the alert. We could be ready to move out in 15 minutes from a sound sleep in a barracks or wherever we were staying. The unit had been formed in England. We were down in Cornwall (southwest England). First we trained out at Land's End and at Penzance, which was a big resort, before the war, with a lot of hotels. Then it had been transformed for troops and we stayed near by for a good while. We trained there for several weeks, much of it you'd do like in basic training. After that we moved into the city of Penzance, and we stayed one or two men in houses. The government arranged for us to have a room in the house. We lived with those people there, but ate our own food.

We, as a special group, also went through paratroop training there. We went out to the Moors in Devon for that and experienced the hills, rain, and mud. We had done some of the pretraining back at Land's End in jumping from scaffolds. We did the actual jumps from planes on the Moors. We were well trained by then in all phases of combat, for we had been at it for 13 months.

About the first day of June, 1944 or maybe the second perhaps, we were awakened. We had a messhall in the town. It had been a commercial building. That's where we went to eat or for any gatherings. They had a big siren on it which they could sound with three big toots. That meant for us to assemble. So one night about three o'clock in the morning, they gave us the signal, and we assembled at the messhall down there. They had trucks waiting on us. Our orders were to, "don't leave any telephone number, don't tell your girlfriend where you're going, or that you're going." We were told we're moving out in silence. The truck left out with no lights, and we went somewhere. I still don't know where it was. It was a good way from where we started because it was daylight by the time we got there.

NIGHT RAIDER REUNION IN BECKVILLE, TEXAS IN 1995
RIGHT TO LEFT - GEORGE WEBER OF CALIFORNIA, JACK HARRIS OF BECKVILLE, TEXAS, NEAL CRAWFORD OF CORSICANA, TEXAS, AND RAY HORN OF BEAUMONT, TEXAS.

We pulled up in a big, open field. There were a lot of tents there with one big one. That's where we got our orders. In that place they had a sand table of the coast of France, of the Normandy area. They showed us the area of Omaha Beach and Dog Red and Dog Green where the invasion would take place along with the cliffs. The cliffs were where the big guns were located. That's where we'd be going.

My group would go in on June 4th just before dusky dark. We'd hit those cliffs and take out the guns. Then we would go down the next morning to the beaches as the invasion was scheduled to take place on June 5th. At daylight the invasion would be coming in. We'd go down the cliff and get some rafts that were hidden there. Then we go over to the beach and go in with the main force of men. We'd wait until they were there. That's what we did. We went in about 30 minutes before sundown. It was light enough for us to see and react. As it happened, the Germans were all in town. They knew the invasion was imminent, but they thought it was going to take place down the coast at Calais. That appeared to a more practical place to make an invasion.

We received our assignments at the sand table and then went back to our tents for the night. We had orders not to talk to anybody, "If your girlfriends back in Penzance found out where you were and came to see you, you can't talk to them." They couldn't come on the premises. By daylight some of those girls showed up. The rules said no groups standing around talking. As a matter of fact, we were almost forbidden to speak to each other, but we were not supposed to move about alone, but in pairs. We knew when and where we were going into France, so we already knew too much.

The first day we were there, the company commander who was a great guy, was killed. He was well trained. I knew him really well as I was the First Sergeant and was with him all the time. He got between two trucks and got killed. At the time, General Bradley asked me to take the company. I was the First Sergeant, and if you understood Army operations, I was already leading the group. The platoon leaders we had were new second lieutenants or "ninety day wonders" with limited experience. I had been 13 months trained. They were happy to have me take over the company. It was quite a responsibility you know to lead men into battle and often death. But that's what happened.

When we had gotten the briefing, a colonel came in. He was a veteran of World War I and World War II. His name was Jones. He was one-eyed. He was a tough-man, but you'd like him. He just meant business. He always carried a quirt as he was an old calvary man. He often tapped his boots with that quirt. He'd tap a soldier with it to. It wasn't to hurt you, but did get you attention. He came into the briefing and was introduced by one of the senior officers. He was a great cusser, but everybody was in World War II. He cussed a little for us, then said, "Well men, 24 hours from now a lot of you will be dead." That went over really well. We already knew that, but we didn't really want to be told that. He continued, "The only thing I regret about it is, I won't be able to go with you. I've got to stay here. If I could I would go with you. I'd love to be going. In fact I'd go by myself." He then told us, "You are the best trained unit that ever has been trained in the U.S. Army or any other army. You're inferior to nobody."

I liked that kind of talk. My hair was standing straight up. He continued, know you'll make a good account for yourselves. That's all I ask you to do, is to give it your best, and you are the best. You're inferior to nobody. You'll meet no man who is your equal. You may meet more in quantity, but you'll never meet any man who is your equal." Then that day we left. The talk was in the morning, and we left that evening.

29TH DIVISION MEMORIAL AT OMAHA BEACH-
RAY HORNE'S SON. ARLIE RAY JR.,
AND GRANDSON, ELI THOMAS

The rafts were hidden in the cliffs. Frogmen or Rangers had done that after coming in by sea. We were flown in. It only took a few minutes to cross the English Channel by air in the C-47 transports. Four planes flew my company. We got on the planes, and I was sitting close by the pilot. We were all seated in the plane, about 50 of us. We were to "free chute," meaning the parachutes didn't open automatically but had to be opened ourselves. We were to jump from 500 feet, which is about as low as you can jump safely. That keeps you in the air less time.

I got really scared while on the plane, almost uncontrollable. I looked at the men. I knew them all on a first name basis. They didn't look too bad. I wondered if I looked as scared as I was. Evidently I didn't. In no time we were there. The pilot said, "We will be over the target in 105 seconds, or less than two minutes. When I turn the green light on, I want you to get those bums off this aircraft. You know how much time you've got." I talked to him a few seconds. He'd carried us before, so I knew him. He asked, "Is there anything I can do for you in the next few seconds?" I said, "Well, if you're in touch with old Colonel Jones, if you can get him on the radio, I'd like to hear him tell me how tough I am one more time before I exit this thing," Then he flashed the green light and we went.

By then they were shooting at us from the ground. We dropped right where we were supposed to. It was a really good drop for us, and we all landed close together. The pilot did this because we were low, and he was flying as slow as he could. That let us land close together. If you didn't jump quickly, you'd be too scattered.

I looked down when I went out and saw a big boulder there. I thought, "When I hit the ground, I'll head for that boulder." I did. The shooting got rough then, and they were hitting that rock from every angle. I knew we could shoot in any direction but knew our men were there too. It was a hard fight. We might have killed as many of our own as we did the Germans. We only had one safe direction to shoot, and that was back across the channel, and there was no use in shooting back there. We did it the best we could and the enemy did the best they could. We took them out, but they nearly took us out.

That was the first night (of June4) we were there. I don't know how many we lost that first night. Later, late in the evening of June 6 was when we were half a mile in from the beach and did not know what to do. We just stopped. We couldn't see anything and decided to wait until daylight. We knew which direction to go, but that was about it. So I took a head count and we had 39 men, after starting with 220 men. We had about 82% casualties.

The first night of June 4, we accomplished our assignment right off in taking care of the big guns up on the cliffs. We killed the gunners and then destroyed the guns themselves. After we had landed, other planes came over and dropped more ammunition, plus the explosives to take the guns out. If we hadn't done that, the actual D-Day invasion would have been a lot more difficult to achieve.

We spent the day of June 5 (the original invasion date) in anxiety and wonder. We just wondered what had happened and where was the invasion? We didn't know of the weather delay. During the day the Germans flew over and dropped some pamphlets. They were propaganda saying General Eisenhower had surrendered all the allied forces and the Germans had won the war. I couldn't believe that. We just held our position all day. The Germans didn't put much of an effort to get us as we had the high ground, and they didn't want the risk the casualties needed to get us. They didn't know how many of us were there either. If they had known how many of us were left, they might have come on up. It would have cost them big to come up, for we had plenty of ammunition, and the high ground and had all the accessible paths covered. They didn't want to pay the price to see who was up there.

We didn't know that the invasion had been delayed one day to June 6. We just had to wait until the next morning to see what would happen, and how to get out from where we were. Then the first break of day, we looked out across the English Channel, and you couldn't see the water for all the ships. I mean they went on for as far as you could see. It was the biggest military operation ever. It looked like you could step from one ship to another. They were coming in from any direction you could see.

They stopped off the beach at about two miles. That's when the troops got off the big transports and transferred to the smaller landing craft to get to the beach. We went down from the cliffs and met the main invasion force down at water's edge by the beaches. There weren't that many of us left at that time.

JACK HARRIS AND RAY HORN

Myself and Ray Horn of Beaumont, Texas killed 17 German soldiers in just a few minutes one day. We were fighting with some Germans at a distance of about 200 yards. There was a dry bed canal maybe 100 feet wide between us. This was in Germany; I don't know where.

We had the Germans backed up against some hedgerows, back behind there, and we had them. We had them outgunned. They decided to surrender, so they came with some white flags. We motioned for them to come on in. They went down in that canal. When they went in there, they went down out of sight before they came up on the side close to us. I noticed right away that there weren't many Germans coming out of the canal as were going in. Horn and I were together, and he noticed it too. He said, "Lets go around here. They're going down the canal which goes in a direction close to their front. Let's circle around and see what we can find out."

We circled out around there. We came down in the canal and looked in the direction we knew they'd be coming from. The canal had a curve in it where they were losing us and where we were situated now. Pretty soon here they came. We could see them, but they couldn't see us. We let them get pretty close and then we just started shooting into them. When they all fell, we quit. The others behind them turned around and went up on our side of the canal and surrendered then. Later some of the others in our group went down to where Horn and I had been and counted 17 dead Germans. We lost a lot and killed many at the same time during the war. It was a rough and terrible time.

C.E. MARSHALL

C.E. Marshall is a native of Panola County who went off to World War II in 1943. He had no interest in marching with the infantry, so chose an alternative by joining the Air Corps. He served in the South Pacific flying against the Japanese as the pilot of a B-24 bomber. Then he returned home to a career and finally to retirement back in Panola County.

C.E. MARSHALL

Q. Mr. Marshall, where were you born?

A. I was born here in Carthage, just about half a mile from where I live now.

Q. Could you tell us when?

A. July 4, 1918

Q. Was your family from here?

A. Yes, both my parents were natives of the area.

Q. What were their names?

A. Carl D. Marshall and Emma Belamy Marshall.

Q. Where did you go to school?

A. I went to school at the Union School which was in the Snap Community, up to the 8th grade. Then I went on and graduated from Carthage High School.

Q. What kind of work did your family do?

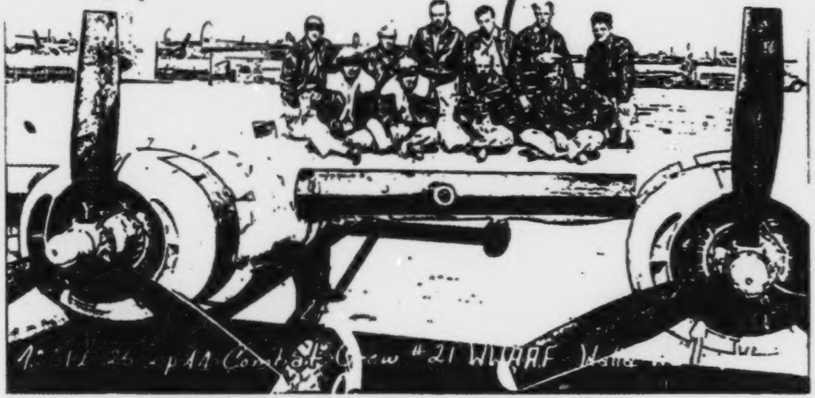
A. My father was a farmer, and my mother was a housewife.

Q. Do you remember the attack on Pearl Harbor?

A. Very well. It was on a Sunday morning. We were at church when we heard about it, up at Cedar Grove Baptist.

Q. When did you go into the military?

A. I went into the military on November, 1942, and was called into active duty in the last of January, 1943. I volunteered for aviation cadet training, and was sworn in and put on stand-by until active duty.



ASSEMBLING THE CREW-SEPTEMBER, 1944-WALLA WALLA, WASHINGTON

Q. Where were you stationed?

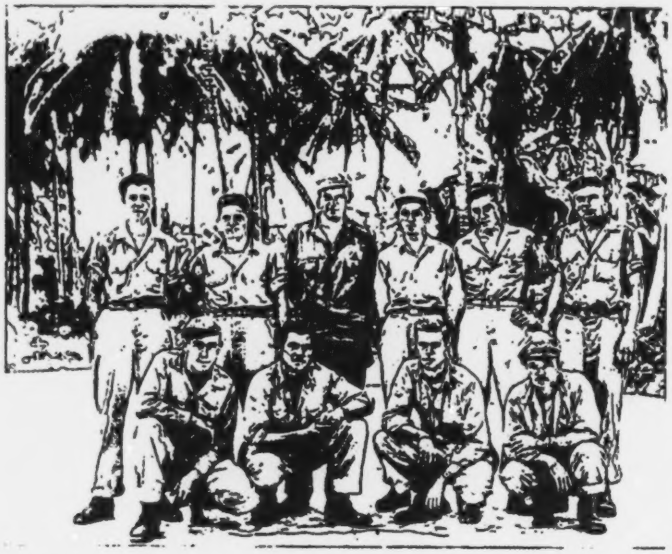
A. It was at Shepherd Field at Wichita Falls, Texas. That was an Army Air Corps base. I went through basic training there. I left there and went to Austin College at Sherman for a refresher course, then went out San Antonio for classification and pre-flight training. From San Antonio I went out Frederick, Oklahoma for advance training. That's where I graduated from flying school. I got my wings as a pilot, and my commission as a 2nd lieutenant. From there I went to Liberal, Kansas and into B-24 transition training. That was for learning to fly the B-24 bomber. From there I went to Walla Walla, Washington for phase training. That's where we got the crew together. I never did stay in one place long.

"DINAH MIGHT II" - ONE OF B-24'S FLOWN BY C.E. MARSHALL'S CREW.

We left the United States in October, 1944. We took a new airplane, a B-24 heavy bomber, across the Pacific. We stopped first in Hawaii. We had to wait in California for seven or eight days for the right winds. We had to have a flight time of no more than fourteen and a half hours because the plane only carried enough for 15 hours flight time. They gave us the 30 minutes extra to be on the safe side. We actually made it to Hawaii in 14 hours and 10 minutes. We were ferrying the new B-24 to deliver it to a modification center in Australia. After Hawaii, we went to Canton Island, to Tarawa, to Guadacanal, to Australia.

Then I was sent up to Nadzab, New Guinea. That was a replacement place, then was assigned to the 307th Bomb Group, 424th Bomb Squadron.

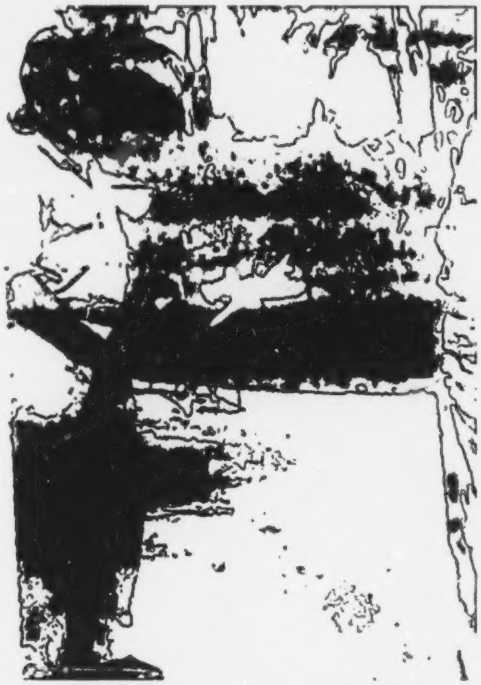
We were stationed on the island of Morotai which is four or five hours west of Biak, New Guinea. That's where we flew our missions out from. We raided principally Borneo and the Philippines. We made most of our bombing missions to target in the Philippines. We went after the oil refineries at Balekpapan, Borneo several times as well.



The Crew - Front row L to R - Cecil E. Marshall, 1st Lt., Pilot, Carthage, Texas. Libero T. BeAmicis, 2nd Lt., Bombadier, Evansville, Ind. Bertram D. Beltz, 2nd Lt., Co-pilot, Shawno, Wis. Thomas W. Goddard, 2nd Lt., Navigator, Blunt, S. Dak. Back row - L to R - William H Austin, T-Sgt, Engineer, Milfor, Del. Henry C Gerry, T- Sgt, Ballgunner (asst. Engr.), Woburn, Mass. Sheridan T. Haines, T- Sgt, Nose Gunner (asst Fadio Op.), Montgomery, Penn. Paul P. Kosowski, S - Sgt, Tail Gunner, Detroit, Mich. Harold J. Baker, T - Sgt, Raido Op, Windsor, Ill. Delbert H. Kitzman, S- Sgt, Upper Gunner, Lomuta, Calif.

Our base on Morotai was on a peninsula that was six or eight miles long and from a half to a mile wide. We had enough of the main island for the air strips. The infantry set up a perimeter to keep the Japanese back from us. The Japanese were cut off from receiving supplies so were isolated back in the jungle. They told us there were from 20,000 - 30,000 Japs there on the bigger island of Halmahara, but that was no threat to us either. We just didn't pay attention to them. We had other things to do.

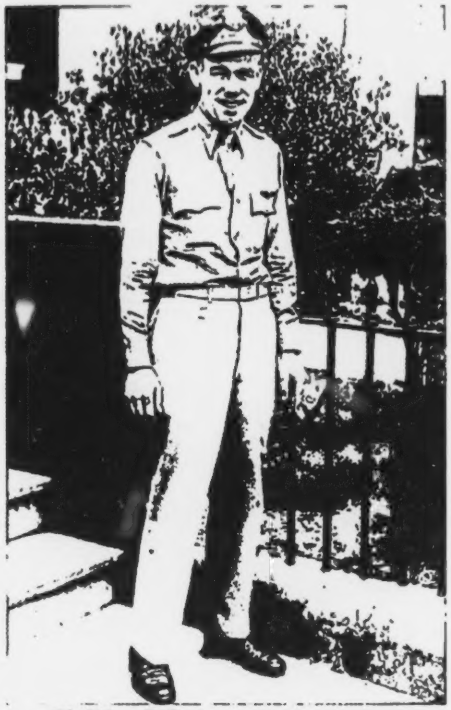
I flew 52 missions altogether. I believe before we took off on our 14th or 15th mission, we got caught in a bombing raid by the Japanese or our air strip. Their planes came in, and we took cover. Everyone in the crew was wounded, but all of us except for one finished our missions. The navigator was evacuated back to the States. The rest of us recovered there, and received a Purple Heart for being wounded. I was off flying duty for a month and a half. While I was recuperating, I got leave to Sydney, Australia and had it good down there. After that I was assigned to New Guinea to help train new crews as an instructor pilot. Then I returned to my outfit on Morotai, and by that time I had enough points to come home.



MEMBERS OF C.E. MARSHALL'S CREW - LT. DEAMICIS, BOMBADIER AND LT. BELTZ, CO - PILOT WITH "LONG - RANGERS" FLIGHT JACKET.

To return to our missions, I told of raiding the oil refinery at Balikpapan, Borneo. Our raids in the Philippines were mostly on Jap air fields. We were trying to knock out their air force. Actually, by the time I got over there, we didn't have a lot of air opposition. Our main danger was getting an overload airplane off the ground. We considered a mission half over with when we got off the ground and reached 1,000 feet into the air. The next thing was having enough gasoline to get there and get back.

We were known as "the Long Rangers" because our missions ranged out a long ways. Our squadron average for a mission was between twelve to twelve and a half hours. That's why I have a hearing aid, for that's when I first started to lose hearing. One sat there for 10 -12 hours flying the plane with noisy engines right outside the window. They told us that it would effect our hearing. At that time there was no insulation to cut down noise in the airplane. I guess out the pilot's window, the end of the propeller was only abut five feet distance right outside. Normally we had the window open to let in the air because of the heat. You'd fly with the window open to get fresh air. Four engines made a lot of noise. I liked flying the B-24. A lot of people didn't, but it got me there and got me back. As far as I'm concerned, it's a wonderful airplane. The B-24 was claimed by some not to be able to take much punishment. But I've seen some return from a mission when you couldn't believe it would still be able to fly. There were more B-24's in action during World War II than any other single type of airplane. It was developed in only 8 - 10 months from the time it



C.E. MARSHALL IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA - FEBRUARY, 1945.

went on the drawing board to when it first flew.

I finished my tour in early June, 1945, and came back to the States. I went to San Antonio to get my leave to come home. I found they had a surplus of four engine pilots, and I was released. I went in to get my leave papers only, and was told I was qualified for discharge from the Air Corps. I never saw the Army do anything so fast. I got out on my birthday which is July 4. When I got home some wondered why I wasn't in uniform, but then the war was over in August with Japan's surrender.

Q. Can you describe the devastation you saw there in the war?

A. I could not conceive of the devastation at Manila, the capital of the Philippines. I was on, I believe, the first mission that was flown to Manila to bomb Japanese airfields outside the city. The first time I was there, it was a beautiful city. Three or four days later, I went on another mission. There were smoke fires here and there. Some of the city was obscured. On the third raid, you could see the devastation from 15 to 16 thousand feet which we were flying.

That was the last time I went over it. Manila was totally destroyed by the Japanese. Large modern buildings were crumpled from the bombing. It was similar to what had happened to Iraq.

Q. Can you describe how you lived overseas?

A. Our tents were sixteen by sixteen. It was up to us to get the material for our living quarters. We built a platform out of mahogany and teak wood. It was rough. The tent was made out of a parachute.

That blocked out a lot of the heat. There were four of us in each tent. We planted palm trees down the sides of it. We lived at a coconut plantation.

Q. Did you receive any decorations or medals?

A. I got the Purple Heart, the Air Medal with two clusters, and the Philippines Liberation Medal. I received about three or four.

Q. What kind of job did you get when you returned?

A. I worked for Chicago Corporation, which was here. I worked there for a short time, then I worked for a gas company in Victoria, Texas. I returned from there after thirty years. It was 1980 when I retired.

Q. How has life been since then?

A. Good, I've enjoyed retirement fully. When I got out, I got busy and built this house. I built about 95% of it myself.

Q. Have you seen any of your crew since the war?

A. I saw the navigator and the bombardier. I saw the bombardier in 1953. I saw him in San Antonio as I was living in Victoria at the time. I saw the navigator six or seven years ago in Denver when I was visiting up there. I've seen him a couple of times now.

And I talked on the phone out my co - pilot just a few months ago. He lives in Wisconsin.

John W. "Jake" Howland

John W. "Jake" Howland was born in Casper, Wyoming in 1920. His father, an oil field engineer, was moved frequently. The family settled in New York, late in the twenties, just prior to the terrible decade of depression in the thirties. Howland graduated from High School in 1938. After working at odd jobs for one year, he returned to the western part of the United States he loved so well and enrolled as a freshman at Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He pursued a course studying Geology and Engineering Science. But the drums of war were pounding. Hitler invaded Poland in 1939 and the crescendo of war increased day by day. By the fall of 1941, it was obvious. War was inevitable. Howland learned to fly under a Government sponsored Civilian Pilot Training program and enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps in 1942. He was classified as a Celestial Navigator. After graduating from Navigation school in 1943 he flew a tour of duty in England. Following the war he returned to college and later pursued a career in the fields of petroleum and mining engineering. In 1949 he returned to Texas and married Dorothy Archer, the girl he first met as an Air Force cadet in 1943. Thirty years later he retired from the oil and mining business and started a consulting business in Land Reclamation. The next challenge was the reclamation of several hundred acres of mined land in east Texas. Howland and his family moved to Carthage in 1979 and have been solid members and supporters of the community ever since.

THE AIR WAR IN EUROPE

By

John W. Howland

AVIATION CADETS

September 1939 was a happy and carefree time for young people of my generation. The terrible depression was beginning to loosen its grip and there

Aviation Cadet John Howland

was an air of optimism among the 300 students enrolled in my freshman class at Colorado College in Colorado Springs. However, September 1939 also marked the start of World War II when Hitler invaded Poland. The Nazi hordes soon captured or controlled western Europe from Norway to the Pyrenees and from Normandy to Rumania. This dark cloud hung heavy over my head as I struggled to concentrate on my studies in the fields of Geology and Engineering Science. But I was fighting a losing battle.

By the fall semester of 1941 most of us realized it was merely a matter of time before we would be in the conflict. One of the courses offered that fall at college was Civilian Pilot Training, subsidized by the United States Government. I enrolled in the course and took great pleasure in learning to fly the J-3 Piper Cubs. It was quite rewarding to be issued a private pilot's license when we successfully completed the course. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor erased all prospects for continuing my studies and I made plans to enlist in the Army Air Corps as soon as the spring semester ended.

Like all other candidates for Cadet training, I was tested physically, evaluated mentally, poked, probed and stuck with so many needles I looked like a pin cushion. Finally, the U. S. Army, in all its wisdom, decided that I would be a candidate for Celestial Navigation school. It made no difference that I had requested pilot training and possessed a valid private pilot's license. The book said I was 1/2 inch short to be a pilot, and the book was always right. So, it was off to pre-flight school at Ellington Field (Houston) and then advanced Navigation school at Hondo, Texas. Pre-flight was a breeze. While there, the best thing that happened to me was meeting a girl named Dorothy Archer at the President's March of Dimes anti-polio ball. However, it took more than six long years of war, study and work before I could return to Houston and marry the girl of my dreams.

My next stop was Hondo, Texas. Summertime in Hondo is always hot, and it is doubly hot when you live in a pine board barracks covered with black tar paper and study Navigation in schools constructed in the same manner. Air conditioning was unheard of in 1943, and our only relief from the heat was the hot air stirred up in the classroom by a couple of floor fans. How well I recall working at my desk in the oppressive heat drawing lines on a Mercator Projection chart using a Weems Plotter and a pair of dividers to measure off distances.

As I leaned over my work, a drop of sweat would fall from my nose and soak the chart. Invariably the drop of sweat seemed to fall at the intersection of two lines where the sharp points of my dividers wallowed out a huge gouge instead of making a neat pinhole in the paper.

Late in the month of June we were studying celestial navigation and had pretty well mastered the mathematical procedures required to plot a sun line-of-position or a three star fix shooting some of the seventy six starts we were required to memorize and identify. With only a month or so remaining before graduation, we were now the upper classmen of Class 43-11-4 and recalled the wonderful stories we had heard from our predecessors about the fabulous times they had had on flights to various places. The one town that always cropped up in these tales of romantic adventure was Tulsa, and the beautiful, passionate, Oklahoma girls.

Excitement grew when the notice was posted scheduling us to fly a day-night mission one Friday early in July. My roommate, Bob Jones, and I laid out our best uniforms of starched cotton suntan shirts and pants. Shoes were polished as were insignia and belt buckles. We were scheduled to assemble at the classroom at 1300 hours and march the mile and a half to the flight line. Following briefing, we would fly a sun line mission to Tulsa taking shots on the afternoon sun. Takeoff time for the return leg of the flight was scheduled for 2200 hours (10 PM) so that we could practice celestial navigation. Of course, our main point of interest was the time lapse period between landing in Tulsa (about 5 PM) and takeoff time (10 PM).

The eventful day arrived and, as usual, it was hot as blazes. Friday was always gasmask drill day at Hondo, and we were required to wear the case, slung over our shoulder, all day long. We lined up outside the classroom, and just as we were preparing to march to the flight line, the gas alarm sounded and we were required to don those rubber monstrosities. Then, we picked up our briefcase with one hand, the Fairchild A-10 octant with the other, and marched off the flight line wearing those smelly masks.

The sweat poured off my face and accumulated in a puddle under my chin. However, I found I could raise my right hand which carried the octant, and hook my thumb under the rubber chin cup to occasionally dump the puddle of accumulated sweat. We were still under the gas alert upon arriving at the flight line and had to sit through briefing in the sweltering hot tar paper covered building that served as a briefing room.

Briefing was over and we arrived at our AT-7 twin Beech navigation trainers just as the all clear sounder. I re-stored my gas mask and looked down at my clean, freshly starched uniform of cotton suntans. I was soaking wet from my collar to the legs of my pants; indeed, a bedraggled spectacle for the pretty girls of Tulsa.

Searching for a way to resolve my dilemma, I opened the rear door of the tail compartment of the plane. I was thrilled to find the answer to my prayers. A coat hangar. I slipped out of those soaking wet pants and shirt in jig time. I then laid the sopping wet trousers on the windswept concrete tarmac. After carefully patting and pressing them with my hands, I draped them over my precious coat hangar. I then shook the wrinkles out of my shirt, buttoned it into place over the pants and hung it up to dry on my parachute support rack. Then, I donned my parachute harness, hung my peanut-pack parachute beside my clothes drying on the left wall of the plane, and prepared to fly the sun line mission to Tulsa.

The takeoff was normal, but as we climbed through 1000 feet the plane started making an unscheduled, slow climbing turn to the right. Suddenly the pilot looked back and shouted, "HOOK UP AND GET READY TO BAIL OUT. I'VE GOT JAMMED RUDDERS."

Chest pack parachutes were snapped into place and we waited. I flew in the rear seat opposite the door and would pull the door escape release if ordered to jump. However, as I sat there wearing my Tee shirt, under shorts and parachute, I wondered what my commanding officer would think of such a spectacle walking in from the prairies, saluting and saying, "Aviation cadet John Howland reporting for duty, Sir."

Suddenly, the plane turned to the left. The pilot called back to say the problem had been corrected and we were on our way to Tulsa. We all breathed a sigh of relief, and while climbing to our flight altitude of 10,000 feet we started carrying out our duties of the sun line mission. But I was having serious problems. The perspiration was evaporating from my sweat-soaked skivvies in the high, dry, cool air. I was so cold my teeth were chattering, and I was shaking like a leaf. Fortunately, the chill only lasted about ten minutes until I was dry. I then warmed up and became functional once again. The rest of the flight was a breeze. Sun lines fell into place just like the textbook said they should. We came into Tulsa on course and on time.

My spirits soared when I inspected my clothes. Everything was perfectly dry and looking great. The Tarmac press job I had given my starched pants left a pretty good crease in approximately the right place. I slipped into my fresh uniform and lined up with the rest of the Cadets in front of the planes just before five o'clock in the afternoon. We popped to attention with eager anticipation as the Captain spoke to us.

"Men, I have good news and bad news for you. The good news is that we are in Tulsa, Oklahoma, home of some of the prettiest and friendliest girls in the United States of America. Our takeoff time for the return flight to Hondo is 2200 hours (10 PM) The bad news is that during our stay in Tulsa, you are all restricted to this base.

I will forever believe that Captain was some kind of a mixed-up sadistic nut. But I met others, just like him, and worse, while in the military. It's just something you write off. One of the misfortunes of being associated with and participating in a stupid war. The saddest part of this story is that I never did get the opportunity to meet the pretty girls of Tulsa.

OPERATIONS TRAINING UNIT

Graduation day from Navigation school was August 5, 1943. After a short leave I was ordered to report to Ephrata, Washington. It was here, late in August that our B-17 bomber crew was first assembled. The Pilot, James L. Tyson was a native of California, married, and at 27, the oldest member of our crew. The original co-pilot showed disturbing signs of alcoholism and was ultimately replaced by a young happy-go-lucky Irishman from Boston named Bill Doherty. The bombardier was a solid, friendly fellow from Phillips, Wisconsin named Frank Palenik. I was the navigator for the team and we were all brand new second lieutenants. The rest of the crew was made up of capable technicians that included Technical Sgt. Richard C. Jensen from Cleveland, Ohio as Engineer-Top Turret Gunner and Sgt. Henry N. White from St Louis, Missouri as Radio Operator. The four gunners were Robert Miller, Charles Churchill, Edgar Berg and

BOEING B-17 BOMBERS WERE USED IN TRAINING AT THE OTU IN KENTUCKY, NEBRASKA

Arnold Farmer, all Sergeants.

The Operations Training Unit (OTU) at Kearney, Nebraska was our next stop. It was here we first pooled our talents to become an aircrew flying the B-17 Flying Fortress bomber. I felt quite comfortable with my crew. As a pilot, Jim Tyson was steady as a rock; the kind of pilot that makes life easy for a navigator. If I set a course at 245 degrees, I would watch the needle of my Flux Gate compass move around until it registered 245 degrees. When Jim Tyson flew the plane, it was glued there. When I observed course deviations, I would check to see whose feet were on the rudder pedals. Invariably it was the co-pilot who was flying the plane. However, no disrespect is intended for our fun-loving co-pilot. Bill Doherty just wasn't cut out to be a bomber pilot. He was a misplaced fighter pilot; a real life "Hot Shot Charlie", the comic strip character made famous by cartoonist Milton Caniff in a strip called "Terry and the Pirates." Frank Palenik, my companion in the nose compartment proved to be a very competent bombardier. Not only was he an excellent bombardier, but a good pilotage navigator as well. Unlike many bombardiers who read comic books or took naps on long training flights, Frank always had a pilotage chart in his hands and fed position reports to me repeatedly whenever the weather was clear. This was a great help to me while I maintained our dead reckoning position on the Mercator chart.

The two months spent in the Operations Training Unit were quite rewarding. We learned to work together and respect the talent and contributions of other crewmembers.

FLYING THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

On Thanksgiving day, the last Thursday in November 1943, we set off for England in a brand new B-17G bomber. The first stop was Syracuse, New York. The next night we were in Presque Isle, Maine. I tried to shoot some sun lines with my A-10 octant while flying to Presque Isle, but results were discouraging and I was quite distraught.

We would soon be flying across the North Atlantic. On this phase of the trip it was every man and every navigator for himself. There was no room for errors or mistakes. The frigid waters of the ocean were relentless and unforgiving. I checked and double checked my A-10 octant and finally discovered it was giving incorrect readings. After obtaining a replacement unit, I tried some star shots. Everything fell into place as it should and my confidence in my ability to do celestial navigation was restored.

Our next stop was Stephenville, Newfoundland; and on the first day of

December 1943 we flew to Gander, Newfoundland. There were 36 B-17s in our group, called the Chambers Provisional Group. Shortly after we landed at Gander it started to snow. And it snowed. And the wind blew. And it snowed . For more than two weeks it snowed and the wind howled.

One evening Jim Tyson and I were discussing the celestial navigation procedures I would be using when he remarked, "You know, it was only 16 years ago that Lindberg flew this route and the world praised his skill as a daring pilot and navigator. Today, thirty six B-17s are sitting out there just waiting for a break in the weather. They will be manned by young men who have barely had one year to learn and become adept at their trade. Is the Army asking too much of us?"

From my point of view, I had no qualms about the challenge that faced us. My faith in Jim Tyson's ability to fly the plane in a safe and cautious manner was unbounded. I will admit to having a few butterflies in my stomach. However, the technical part of the task confronting us was of no concern to either of us. I did wonder about some of my navigation classmates who had barely squeaked by without washing out, especially one fellow who never mastered the identification of stars. But that was a problem some other pilot would have to resolve. Jim Tyson and I were ready to fly the North Atlantic Ocean. When it finally stopped snowing , it took a couple of days to clear the runways and dig out the planes. The afternoon of December 17th we received word that we were ready to go.

The briefing room was crowded with the 36 crews of the Chambers Provisional Group who were scheduled to fly. According to Metro, the weather was supposed to be fairly good with 30 to 40 MPH tail winds helping us all the way. However, we were alerted to a front we were supposed to pass through about 100 miles west of the Irish coast. I filled out my flight plane, drew in the route on my Mercator Projection chart, grabbed the rest of my gear and headed for the plane that was being pre-flighted by the crew. The gross weight of the B-17 was 58,000 pounds, so we had a pretty good load on board. Each member of the crew had a bedroll, a B4 bag and an A3 bag tucked in the bomb bays. In addition, my navigator's footlocker was jammed into the small nose compartment.

We were scheduled to takeoff in the no. 3 position at 0006 hours (midnight). The fuel tanks (main and Tokyo) were topped off after the engines were warmed up. Fuel capacity was 2750 gallons. Oil tanks were full with 36 gallons each. The number 2 plane wasn't ready to go so we taxied down to the takeoff position in his place. It was very cold and the snow was piled high on each side of the runway. However the plows had done a good job clearing the runways. The brakes were cold, and Jim had a little trouble with them sticking.

I was wearing my electric suit over my regular wool pants. I also wore my fleece-lined boots over my electric boots. I wasn't nervous or apprehensive, although everyone on the crew realized our chances were nil if we were forced down in the Atlantic or became lost on the way across. I surely didn't feel cocky, but had every confidence in my ability to navigate the ship safely across the ocean. As the final test of my recently issued octant, I ran an Ho-Hc check on it the previous day. Everything worked out fine. The octant was reading star angles accurately.

The all clear for the takeoff was received from the tower at ten minutes past midnight. However, just as Jim was running up the engines a large trailer truck full of gasoline turned around in the runway intersection ahead of us. The words flew hot and heavy as Bill Doherty told the tower what to do with that truck. Finally, at 0021 hours, Jim eased the throttles forward and we started for England.

With snow piled high on each side of the runway, it seemed like we were taking off from the bottom of the Grand Canyon. The air was cold and dense and the runway was about 7000 feet long. After two or three bounces we were airborne about 3/4 of the way down the runway. We made a wide sweeping turn and passed the airport at 0028, twenty eight minutes after midnight. My chart was a small scale Mercator that covered the entire route between Gander Lake and our objective, Prestwick, Scotland. We flew a great circle course because of the shorter distance and more favorable winds metro claimed we would have by comparison with a rhumb line course. The stars were bright. VERY BRIGHT! I took my first three star fix about one half hour after takeoff and got a ground speed of 174 knots. I had intended to use Polaris, the North Star, to determine our latitude, but I had problems. The night was so very clear, third and fourth magnitude stars looked like first and second magnitude stars. The field of view for identifying stars in the octant was quite limited, and I could not positively identify Polaris, a second magnitude star, in the midst of a background of unbelievably bright third and fourth magnitude stars. Plans for using the North Star for latitude shots were abandoned, and I used other more discernable stars such as Betelgeuse, Sirius, Dubhe, the Moon and planet Mars. The outside temperature was a modest –10° C (+14° F). My three star fixes were falling into place, so the first part of the trip was more or less uneventful. I obtained position reports from celestial fixes at 0228, 0328, 0436 and a final fix at 0536. The ground speeds were 197, 196, 201 and 205 knots respectively. This was phenomenal for a B-17 and showed we were being pushed along by a strong tailwind just a few degrees off the tail . I was getting ready to take some more star shots when the pilot called and told me to put on my oxygen mask as he was climbing to get over some clouds. Within just a few minutes, the clouds surrounded us. This was the front the meteorologists told us to expect. We still had about 800 miles to go, so I put the octant away and kept track of our course by dead reckoning.

We were homing by radio compass on a strong beam at Dernyacross, Ireland and expected to fly out of the front within thirty minutes to one hour. The temperature was –29 deg C and we were flying smoothly at 16,700 feet. My ETA to Dernyacross was 0841. About 40 minutes out of Dernyacross the radio compass started to swing violently. The signal had to be disregarded. However, we flew out my ETA, still confident we would clear the front as Metro said we would.

Jim decided to go down and take a look below. We dropped to about 12,000 feet and hit some very bad icing conditions. One minute the black perforated outer barrel of the machine gun sticking out the starboard navigator's window was merely a shadow in the dim light. The next minute it looked like a huge white war club. Ominously, the air speed indicator dropped to zero because the heater in the pitot tube had failed.

Jim applied power, climbing to try and find an altitude where icing conditions weren't so severe, flying by power settings from that point on. For the navigator, there were no stars, radio signals or power settings to turn to. All I could use was my last three star fix, already 2-1/2 hours ancient, and a wind stronger than anything I had ever observed from my navigator's table.

The engines groaned while climbing on our course to Prestwick, and we finally broke out on top at 26,500 feet. Radio reception was very poor. The air was full of static. It was cold! (-45 deg C or—50 deg F). My ETA to Prestwick was 0927. After we flew it out, I put the pilot on a corrected circle course so the wind wouldn't blow us out of the country. There was nothing else to be done, so I listened to the radio as Jim tried to contact the Prestwick tower.

Jim could make contact with both Prestwick and Nutts Corner, but they wouldn't respond when he asked for a QDM (Magnetic heading) to their base. Finally, after trying fruitlessly for thirty minutes, he made another call to Burton (code name for Prestwick) saying, "Hello Burton. This is Harry How (our code name). Come in please.

The response was loud and clear in a beautiful cockney accent, "Ello Airy Ow. Where are you?"

Jim replied, "We don't know. What is the ceiling over your base?"

The beautiful cockney accent came back strong saying, "Ello Airy Ow.

Where are you?"

Jim replied, "We still don't know. What is the ceiling over your base?"

Once more Prestwick came in with, "Ello Airy Ow. Where are you?"

Finally Jim replied. "Burton, this is Hairy How. We don't know exactly where we are. We are sitting up here at 26,500 feet above a solid cloud layer in the vicinity of your field. Our air speed indicator isn't working and we are losing number four engine (low oil pressure). Unless you can give us some help in the next thirty minutes we are going to bail out and leave this SOB sitting up here.

The response was immediate. "Ello Airy Ow, DON'T DO THAT. Fly 180 degrees and give us a long count."

Jim picked up the heading and went through the ritual of counting slowly up to ten and back to one again.

About two minutes later the tower operator came back requesting, "Fly 270 degrees and give us another long count."

Jim complied, and just a few minutes later the tower operator was back saying, "Come on down Airy Ow, you are right over the base."

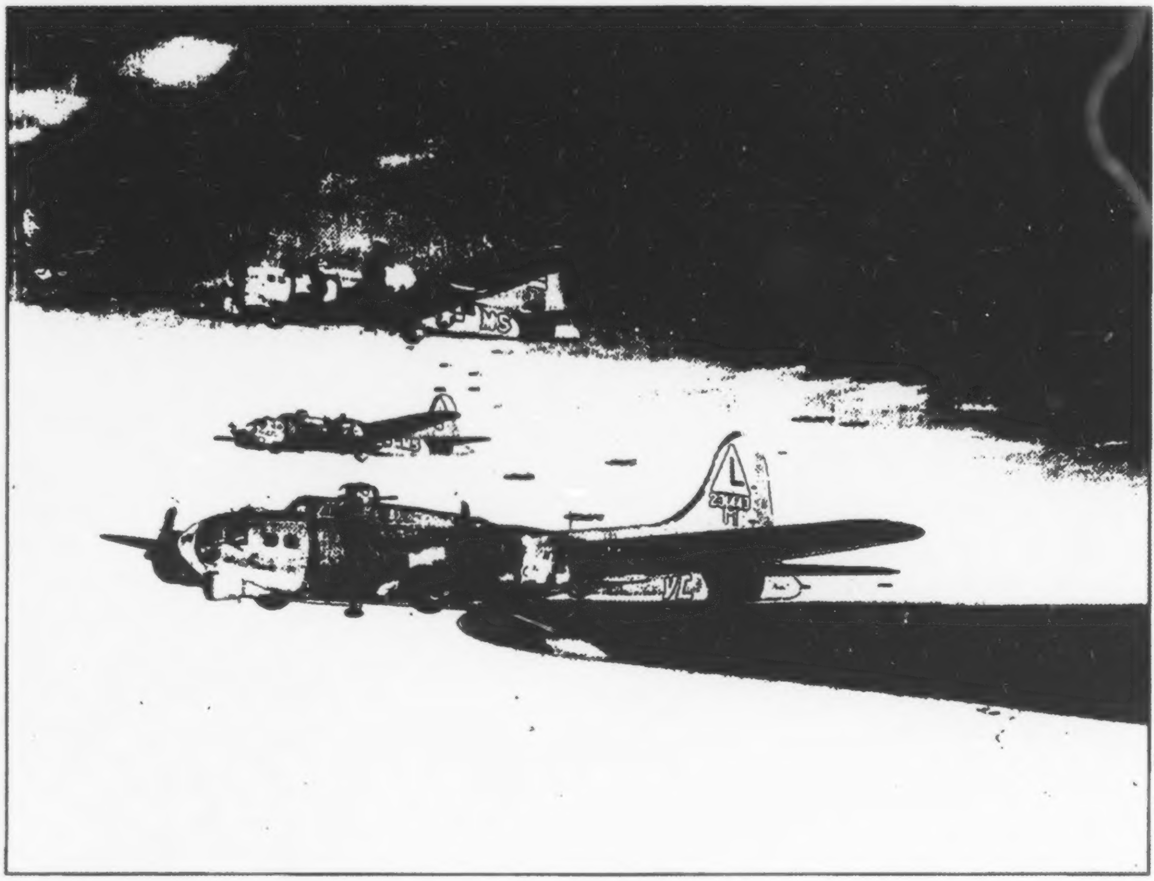
At that moment the happiest navigator in the entire 8th Air Force was sitting in the nose compartment of a B-17 numbered 237986.

Despite several queries, the tower operator had never given us the altitude of the cloud layer above the field. We were all "goosey" about going through the same bad icing conditions we had encountered earlier. Finally, after descending through 10,000 feet of solid clouds (without icing) we broke into the clear at 16,000 feet. We marveled at the beauty of the English countryside spread out below us. The temperature soon rose above 32 deg F and the ice melted in the pitot tube. The air speed indicator started working again and our spirits soared.

Prestwick was a fantastic contrast to Gander Lake. Gone were the piles of snow and the snowplows. The vegetation was lush, dark green and damp with moisture. It looked like New England in late spring except the trees were bare of leaves. We grabbed our bags and headed for our quarters, but couldn't get into our rooms until after supper. I sat down in an easy chair in the BOQ and promptly fell sound asleep. I was pooped! About four hours later I was aware that someone was moving my legs. I awakened to find a scrubwoman on her hands and knees lifting each leg gently while she scrubbed the floor. I was flabbergasted since I had never before seen a scrub person get closer to the floor than the end of a mop handle.

It was dinnertime, and I was famished. Our rooms were ready and we spent our first night in England catching up on sorely needed sleep.

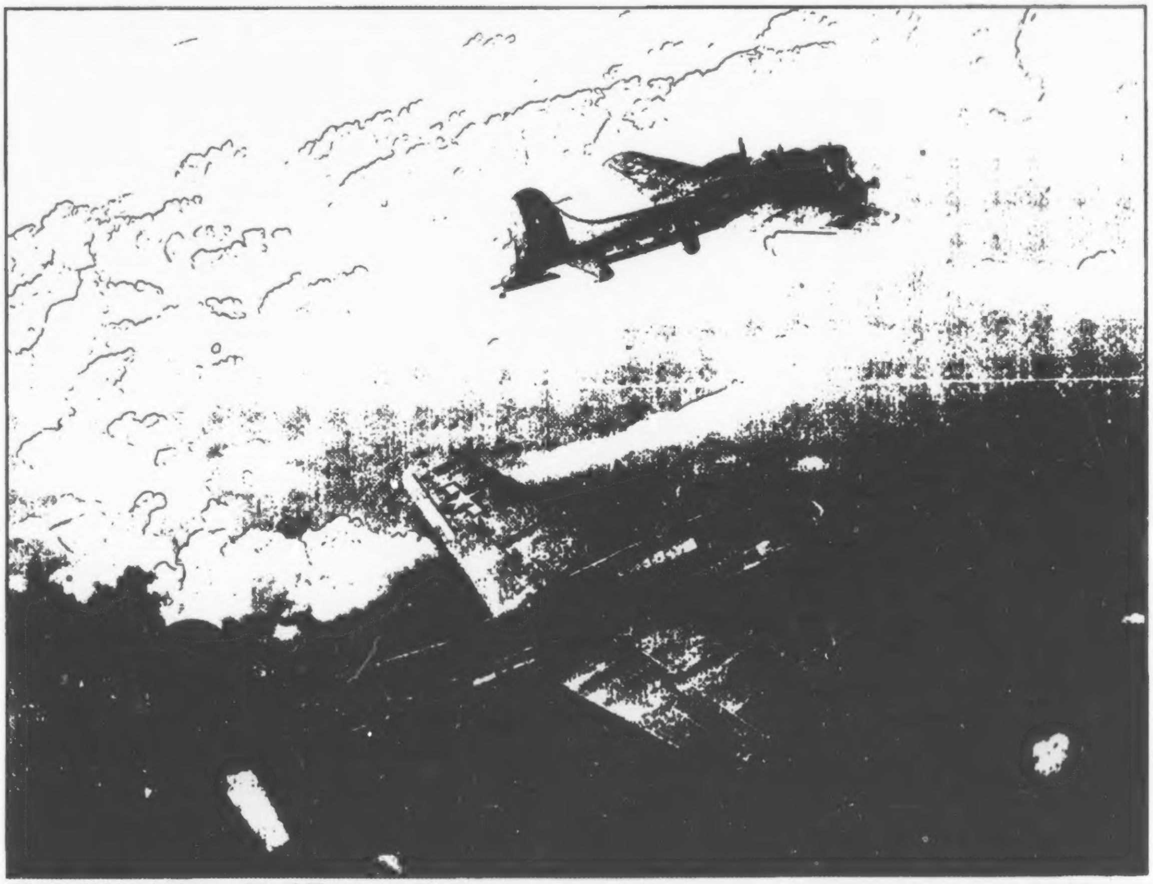
The following day we flew to Warton,, England, a modification center just north of Liverpool. It was here we learned that three ships out of the Chambers Provisional Group were lost in the flight across the Atlantic. One plane was lost with all hands in the ocean. Another crash landed in southern Ireland with four fatalities. However, the fate of the third plane was a mystery. The plane and its entire crew simply vanished.



381st Bomb Group and Combat Operations

We spent the next ten days processing through a redistribution center at Stone in Staffordshire. Two days after Christmas, 1943 we received our orders assigning us to the 535th Squadron of the 381st Bomb Group at Ridgewell, in East Anglia. We were replacements for some of the nine crews and ninety men lost to enemy action by the 381st Bomb Group during December 1943.

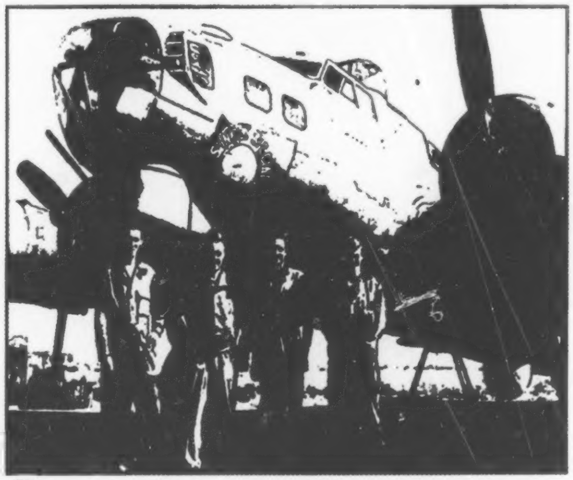
The day of our arrival at Ridgewell, Lord Haw Haw welcomed us to England by name along with many other members of the Chambers Provisional Group. He assured us we would all soon be dead, or shot down and captured as prisoners of war. The threats didn't bother us, but we were shocked at the breach of security. It wasn't until some time later we learned that the third plane lost during our crossing of the Atlantic made a serious navigation error. They failed to detect the strong tailwinds pushing them across the Atlantic and were hundreds of miles south of course. When they requested landing instructions over a German airport in Normandy, an alert English-speaking tower operator gave them landing instructions. They wound up as prisoners of war and Lord Haw Haw gained access to the secret orders and names the men carried in their documents.



PATHFINDER B-17 (TOP) SHOWS THE ELONGATED RADAR DOME REPLACING THE BALL TURRET GUNS.

Combat operations commenced January 11, 1944 with a raid on the Focke-Wulf assembly plant at Oschersleben, about 75 miles SW of Berlin.. It was a tough way to start. Losses were very high. Forty seven bombers out of the attacking force of 345 were lost. Although we survived the raid, prospects didn't appear favorable towards successfully completing a twenty-five mission tour of duty. However, during the next two months our crew flew eleven missions including all five missions of the so-called "Big Week", February 20 thru 25, 1944, (152 bombers lost). Our last three missions as a line combat crew were the three raids to Berlin, March 6, 8 & 9, 1944. (114 bomber lost). By this time we had completed eleven combat missions and were almost halfway through our tour of duty. During the Berlin raids, my pilot and I were chewed out by our commanding officer for breaking radio silence over enemy territory. The first occasion was March 6th. The lead ship deviated from flight plan, led the formation over Osnabruck and some well marked flak batteries. One ship was lost to flak. At my request, Jim Tyson called the lead ship, told them where we were, and requested a return to flight plan. The commanding general, was riding in that lead ship. We were abruptly told to "Maintain radio silence over enemy territory". However, they made a course change and avoided the hotbed of flak at Hanover toward which we were heading.

Pathfinder flight crew (LtoR)
Front: John Howland, Nav., Jim Tyson, P, Bill Doherty, CP
Rear: Jensen, Eng; Farmer, TG; Miller, WG; White, Radio.



Pathfinder maintenance crew
(Note radar dome replacing ball turret guns)

Three days later while enroute to Berlin, I made a request for a coded position report from our radar-equipped lead ship. We had been flying over a solid layer of clouds for more than three hours and I needed a navigation check point. Although authorized to make such requests, we received another "Maintain radio silence over enemy territory" message from the lead ship. Further, we were again "chewed-out" by the base commander at debriefing. However, just three hours later, the pilot and I were again called before our commanding officer and offered a transfer to the Pathfinder Force to become a lead crew under General Gross in the 1st Combat Wing. We accepted the challenge, and the remainder of our missions were flown in either the lead or deputy lead slot for the 1st Combat Wing.

The pilot and navigator of lead Pathfinder team worked closely together. The Combat Wing we normally led consisted of three Groups of 18 B-17s, a total of fifty-four planes. The lead pilot had to be steady as a rock. Rapid or impulsive changes could have disastrous consequences on the formation we were leading. Turn too fast and those on the outside couldn't keep up while those on the inside were screaming into their microphones, "Speed it up, we're stalling out down here." Jim Tyson finally settled on a 1/4 needle width as a standard turn for the Combat Wing 54 ship formation. It required eight minutes to make a 360 degree turn . However, it made formation flying much easier for the rest of the pilots, and a good formation was our basic protection against enemy fighters. In essence, leading a combat wing through the skies was like conducting an aerial ballet in slow motion. But those who stumbled and fell seldom regained their feet.

Restricted maneuvering also created problems for the lead navigator. Many of the procedures taught at navigation school such as double-drift wind readings were useless. Instead, I relied upon the cathode ray tube of the GEE box and the H2X radar to provide me with accurate position reports. When used in conjuction with my navigator's air plot, I could establish wind conditions essential to accurate navigation.

One of the toughest jobs confronting me was to lead a formation of 54 bombers over a checkpoint, on course, at altitude and exactly on time. I talked to many navigators on this subject; but always receive the same answer. "Just allow plenty of time and jog left or right to kill time while you are heading for the check point." Such a procedure is fine if you are flying a single plane or in a small flight of planes. But jogging, and turning, or slowing down and speeding up was bad news for the 54 ship Combat Box formations we were leading. Turns had to be slow and very gentle. Turn the formation too fast and those on the outside can't fly fast enough to keep up. Those on the inside are slowing down to the point where they are ready to stall out. No! Jogging and unnecessary turns wasn't the answer. I pondered this problem many hours making sketches and dozens of calculations. Nothing seemed to fit until one evening while I was sitting on my bed. Like the answer to many perplexing problems, the answer was instantaneous, clear, and oh-so-obvious. If you want to fly over a checkpoint at a certain time, you shouldn't fly toward the checkpoint. You should fly away from it. I explained the theory to Jim Tyson. He agreed it was a workable approach toward resolving our problem.

Jim and I worked out the details of the departure procedure during practice flights in the air. It requires about four minutes and a circle 10 miles in diameter to turn a Combat Box formation 180 degrees. This was a turn of 1/4 needle width on Jim's turn and bank indicator. If we wanted to fly over a checkpoint on a course of 90 degrees at exactly 0920 hours in the morning, Iwould fly a reciprocal heading of 270 degrees. Then, make certain I passed 10 miles right or left of the checkpoint at least 4 minutes prior to the scheduled departure.

To illustrate, let's say we flew 10 miles abreast of the checkpoint on a heading of 270 degrees (west) at 0900 hours, twenty minutes before departure time. Since 4 minutes would be used for turning, we had 16 minutes to divide between flying west (270 deg) and east (90 deg). Under no wind conditions we flew 8 minutes west, made the turn (4 minutes), and flew another 8 minutes east. With practice, and making time allowances for wind, we got so we could hit our departure time within a few seconds.

Bert Stiles, my college classmate, was a talented and gifted writer who flew with the 91st Bomb Group.

My final mission was a raid to Berlin on June 21, 1944. My friend and college classmate Sam Newton also flew on this raid. Normally, another friend and college classmate named Bert Stiles flew as Sam's co-pilot. However, a trainee pilot replaced Bert Stiles this date.. In his classic book **"Serenade to the Big Bird"** Bert Stiles describes this raid by reports from his crewmembers. The reader is invited to share the talented and gifted writing of Bert Stiles as he describes the raid to Berlin on June 21, 1944.

"I didn't fly for awhile. I was just a black dog around the squadron, an extra co-pilot. Sam's crew was beginning to change. Bird (Bombardier) was working at Group. Beach (ball turret gunner) went away to the Flak House for a week. Air crews are a lot like people. They have to grow up sometime. Before Sam took his boys to Berlin the third time, nobody thought much of the crew, except maybe the guys on the crew, and I never heard any of them making any great claims. They were just six enlisted men assigned to an airplane. They got along all right, because there was a war on and you have to get along with the guys you fly with.

The Luftwaffe had taken itself deep into the homeland for awhile, and taken an extremely coy attitude. A couple of crews had whipped through thirty missions without even speaking to a 109 or a 190, by getting in on all the no-ball rides to France. The days of the Abbeville Kids and the Bastards from Brunswick were forgotten back in time. With no fighting, it doesn't matter who stands by the guns and swings the turrets around, and looks out the windows. Pilots tend to forget they may need gunners some afternoon. Gunners tend not to give a damn, and tend not to be eager about keeping their guns clean, and their eyes sweeping the sky for the enemy.

The twenty-first was the first time the Forts had been to Berlin since the invasion. The enlisted men had to grow up or fold up that day.

It wasn't the old crew. I was in the sack. Grant Benson, (Navigator) was grounded with a running nose. Parsons went along in his place. Bird (Bombardier) was working up at Group and Spaugh (Togglier} was flying in his place. Mac, the Public Relations officer went along for the ride. But the enlisted men were the original six.

The ride across the North Sea was more or less normal, I guess. They didn't go on oxygen until halfway across. The sea was restfully free of flak guns as always and they didn't have any trouble. Oates (co-pilot) did a lot of flying...good flying. When the formations turned in at the coast, the VHF set came through with tidings of bandits. Somebody up ahead was catching hell.

They were flying in the low squadron. A half-hour before they reached Berlin, the low leader began to get feelings of insecurity and tucked up pretty tight. The wings were jammed in close together, and Sam was caught in a three-way squeeze, from the sides and on top and down under. And there was prop wash. After almost chewing the element leader's trailing edges, and having his own chewed off, Sam decided to get the hell up to an open slot in the high squadron. He finessed out of the squeeze play and started pulling up. On the way somebody called a large formation of planes heading the wrong way. At briefing there had been a lot of talk about the RAF tagging along behind on this ride, and really cooling the town for all time.

"Look at those damned Mosquitoes," Sam remembered saying. "Those lucky bastards are on the way home," somebody else chimed in. "Formation at nine o'clock level," Sharpe (tail gunner) said. Crone (waist gunner) called them when they got around to seven (o'clock). They were silver and they looked peaceable and went about their business in an orderly manner. About that time Crone (W.G.) woke up. They weren't Mosquitoes. "Them are ME 410's," he announced.

They were turning in. Sharpe lined up on the lead ship. "Here they come!" His voice wasn't much he said later. They were 410's all right, new ones with no paint. They came in on a tail-pass, just as Sam was slipping back into formation. Sharpe (Tail gunner) squeezed down on the first one, and the first one squeezed down on Sharpe, and they kept shooting at each other and kept on waiting. Then Sharpe forgot to shoot any more and yelled, "I got one...I got one...I got one of the sonsabitches." The ME sagged off and began to come apart. The top hatch spilled off and the pilot bailed out. There were more.

The 20-millimeters were bursting all around the formation. Up ahead Forts were beginning to falter. One nosed out of formation in the group on the left and began to give birth. Nine chutes. One old painted job out there at three o'clock had a fire in his Tokyo tanks. Another tipped off on a wing and split-S-ed out of formation.

They queued up and came through again. Both sides were throwing everything. Sharpe's left feed went out, and he kept on shooting with one gun.

"Every time the ball opened up I thought we had it," Crone (W. G.) said later. "I could feel my ass being chewed off." The ammunition covers fell off the ball, and Beach (Ball Turret) couldn't shoot straight down without losing all his ammunition.

Ross (Radio Operator) knocked off a 410 when the simple guy tried to pull in and fly formation while he lobbed shells into the group ahead. "I could've conked the pilot with my gun barrel," Ross said. "But I decided to shoot him." The 410 blew up.

Lewis (Engineer, Top Turret gunner) tracked another across the tail, saw the pieces begin to chip off, and smoke belch out of the cowl, and the pilot came out streaming silk.

"Five o'clock high," somebody called.

"Coming in at nine," Mac said in the nose. It was a 190 going under to knock off a crippled Fort. Crone (W.G.) lined up on straight-away low. It tipped over into a spin, spilling flame, and spun into the ground. "I watched him all the way," Crone (W.G.) said. "I just stood there and watched him with one eye, and waited for that other bastard with the other." The other bastard came in from two o'clock high on the nose. Mac tagged him fair, saw him break up. Lewis called a bailed-out pilot and a falling wing.

The business was all back by the tail. Spaugh (Togglier) kept his guns swinging and did a lot of shooting, but they were all long prayer shots, and he didn't claim anything more than a couple of scareoffs. Oates (C.P.) and Sam were going nuts. Oates had to listen to VHF so he'd know what the leaders were doing. Sam was pleading with someone to tell him what was going on. All the guns were shooting, and there were Forts and fighters throwing up all over the sky, and 20-millimeters splashing around.

"Where are they?" Sam said. "Anybody hit? Tailgunner? Waist gunner...where are they...radioman? What the hell is going on back there?"

"Sir," Sharpe (T.G.) said, in almost a scream, "will you please shut up?" Sam decided the situation was under control.

The 410's made two main passes and several feints, and the sidelines were thick with 109's and 190's looking for easy meat, waiting for wounded Forts to fall back. Little Friends came on the scene then, 38's over the top and 51's in from ten o'clock high. Sharpe was soaked with sweat. Crone (W.G.) wiped his forehead and came away with a cupful.

After two trips to Hamburg, the flak was minor-league stuff, but it was rough, and it was everywhere...nothing but the little black puffs, though none of them were tracking along behind, or poking up to powder the nose. Somebody said there were bandits in the area, but the Luftwaffe was through with Sam's crew.

"Check in," Sharpe (T.G.) said. "Everybody here? One okay. Two okay?" Everybody checked in on time.

"We got a little hole in the right stabilizer," Crone (W.G.) said. "It ain't much."

"Godamighty, how'd we do it?" Sharpe (T.G.) asked. His hands were shaky and the sweat was draining down his back and puddling-up in his electric shoes. He turned the electricity off and he still sweated. Sam crawled back through the bomb bays on an inspection tour. Crone was still stroking his gun kindly. Beach was moaning about his gun covers. Sharpe was still sweating.

"Hey Crone," Sharpe called up. "I guess you checked out that shooting iron

today."

Nobody hurt. No holes to speak of.

Sam didn't really believe it. Probably a wing would fall off before long. "Got a roochie?" he asked Ross (Radio Op.). Ross had a pack of sweat-soaked Luckies, and everyone in the waist had one. Everyone had two. Lewis even took time out in the top turret and had one.

The let-down was restful. The formations had loosened up out in the channel. At 12,000 Oates told everybody to take off their oxygen masks and relax. England came through on time on course.

"On flight plan," Parsons (Nav.) said. First word of the day.

I met them at interrogation. They all looked like they hadn't slept for a year. All of them got pretty jagged on the scotch. They were talking with both hands and drinking coffee and dunking donuts and trying to get more scotch. John Nilson, a fraternity brother of Sam and me, was doing the interrogating, and he couldn't hear any answers to his questions, because every time he got someone steadied down to coherent accounting, somebody like me from the outside would come in and paw the boys over and ask if it was really true, five of those bastards.

"Probably six," said Sharpe. "Lewis is only claiming one, but he got two."

"Maybe," said Lewis.

"You might as well claim," Sharpe said. "We won't get 'em anyway."

Finally, S2 cleared the interrogating room and everybody had to stand at the door and watch Sam beam on his club. Every ten seconds somebody else would say, "Brother, I thought we'd had it." Or, "I was halfway out the hatch." Or, "You should've seen us." Madhouse.

Sharpe came out of the briefing hut with most of his clothes off, talking to Crone who was talking right back to him. Two guys from Black's crew came up and grabbed them. "Sure was a sweet goddamn job of shooting," they said. Sharpe laughed. "You ought to see my left gun barrel." "Like a goddamn corkscrew," Crone said. "First time I ever knew I could pray and cuss in the same sentence," Sharpe said. I think he read that, but it must have been true, because he said it three or four times.

Oates went away with the sack of kits. He was shot, and the scotch had almost knocked him off. Parsons went with him. He had to turn in his log.

Sam came into the equipment room wearing his two .45's.

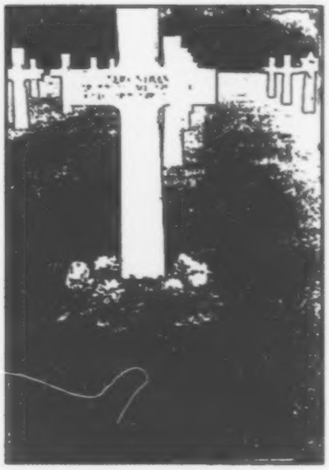
"Some outfit you got Sambo," somebody said.

"A hot bunch of operators," somebody else said.

"Don't tell me your troubles," Sam said. "The chaplain's right outside. I've

told you a thousand times I got the best crew." He hadn't told anyone. He hadn't even thought so himself. But he thought so then.

The sky showed blue out the window. The flagpole showed red, white and blue.



BERT STILES FINISHED HIS TOUR IN BOMBERS AND VOLUNTEERED FOR A SECOND TOUR IN FIGHTERS. HE WAS KILLED IN ACTION ON AN ESCORT RAID TO HANOVER, NOVEMBER 26, 1944. HE IS BURIED IN THE ARDENNES CEMETERY NEAR LIEGE BELGIUM.

Bert Stiles had an outstanding ability to describe combat action. His exceptional talent shows through in his succinct descriptions of mayhem and slaughter, human action and reaction to life and death in the skies over Germany. I too flew on this raid to Berlin. It was the thirtieth and final mission of my tour of duty with the Eighth Air Force. We lost twenty-one out of fifty-four ships in the 1st Bombardment Wing. Read for yourselves another account of the same raid.

June 21, 1944 (From the wartime diary of J. W. Howland)

Our crew has been sweating out a trip home which we will make just three days from now, if we live that long. Our orders have already been cut, and we were supposed to be finished with our tour of duty. But, someone screwed up, and we were sent to Ridgewell last night after a preliminary briefing for Berlin. I felt queer about the raid. There was a deep, unexplainable feeling within me that my number was up. That my luck had run out. The loss of Burch, Fox, Jonesy and other friends and acquaintances, the close calls, the exploding flak, blood in the cockpit and the everlasting pressure to do the job of lead navigating, no matter what happens, is tearing me to pieces. I feel worn out.

Briefing was at 0200. The target, government buildings near the Tiergarten. Major Halsey was Acting Wing Commander and Ted Homdrom my co-navigator.

As the briefing officer made his spiel, I listened and watched attentively. My apprehension was high. At the end of his talk he looked over the group of assembled flyers and said, "Any questions?"

I raised my hand and said, "You didn't mention enemy fighter strength. What kind of opposition can we expect?"

There was actually a snicker of laughter that went through the assembly. We hadn't seen any appreciable enemy air activity in over a month, and many of the crews were newly arrived. I really don't remember what the briefing officer said, for the response to my question was very upsetting and made me wonder, "What the hell is wrong. Is it me, or is it them?"

After briefing, I still felt as leery of the mission as I had the night before, and wished they would scrub it. I think everyone on our crew felt the same way.

The ship we were flying was PFF #594 since our Sunkist Special, #625, was badly shot up on our last raid and laid up for repairs. Takeoff was at 0430. Assembly went off without any problems. As lead navigator I used my reciprocal-heading departure method and we were exactly on time. We hit our departure from the English coast at Cromer, again exactly on time, and headed for the Danish peninsula. Our route in took us between Kiel and Hamburg. Then we picked up a heading due east. In the target area we were to fly east past Berlin and make a wide 180 deg turn to the right and make our bomb run over the north central part of the city, on a westerly heading.

As we flew past the Hamburg area, we could see a smoke column 15,000-ft high rising through the solid undercast, evidently from the oil refinery we had attacked so successfully three days ago.

A fine escort of P-47 fighters accompanied us in the Hamburg area; and I regained a little courage that I seemed to be so badly in need of. However, as we turned east and headed for Berlin, I lost much of that regained courage when a Group of P-51 fighters we were briefed for didn't show up. Nevertheless, we droned along towards Berlin. Then, another Group of escort fighters failed to show up as scheduled.

Navigation is perpetual while we are in the air, so I stayed busy. However, I was quite concerned about our lack of fighter escort. We were the second Wing of the 1st Division due over the target, and could see the lead Wing in the distance ahead of us. While flying along at 26,000 feet, I looked ahead and saw, what looked like, two Wings out in front of us. At first I wondered where that second Wing of B-17s had come from. But then discovered it was a whole gaggle of German twin engine fighters.

They flew towards us and passed just out of machine gun range to the right. Our estimate was sixty Me 410s and Ju 88s. They climbed, and assembled behind us and made a diving attack. I couldn't see them because the attack was from the rear; but I could see their 20-mm shells exploding all around us. I would also hear the chatter of the top turret guns and the gunners calling off B-17s going down and German fighters as well. It was a wild attack, and my adrenalin was flowing freely. Eighteen B-17s were shot down during the attack, approximately 33% of the entire Wing. Most were from the high Group made up largely of planes from the 398th Bomb Group.

Major Halsey was busy on the radio trying to get fighter support, but he wasn't having much success. However, we were lucky. The fighters only made one vicious attack and then left us. About that time, numbers 2 & 3 engines started acting up. I could hear the RPMs drop. I thought for sure 'we'd had it.' Jim couldn't climb to the 27,000-ft. flight-plan bombing altitude, so we leveled off at 26,300 ft. and went on.

Shortly after the fighter attack, which occurred about 50 miles N of Berlin, we turned S and then W to make our bomb run. Charlie Eager was our Bombardier, and was able to pick up the target about 8 miles away, despite low clouds and dense, persistent contrails at our altitude. A few minutes later we hit the toughest barrage of flak I've ever had to fly through.

We didn't have the benefit of chaff dropped by preceding Wings because there was only one Wing ahead of us, and they attacked targets near the Templehoff Airdrome south of the city. Ted was leaning over Charlie's shoulder trying to help him pick out the target when suddenly there was a helluva "BANG". A piece of flak whizzed by Ted after making a small hole in the Plexiglas nose. Charlie was cool as a cucumber and didn't look up from his bombsight.

Just at "Bombs-Away", another piece struck the nose of the ship and blew out the front window on the right side and made a long gash in the aluminum skin. Ted was hit in the right eye by flying Plexiglas. Just then I heard Major Halsey say, "Let's make a correction to the left here."

A left turn at that point would have meant an extra 2 or 3 minutes in the flak area so I pushed my mike button and said, (although I don't recall it) "for Christ's sake no. Turn right to 315 degrees!" (Major Halsey reminded me when we were back on the ground. We both got a laugh out of it.)

I then called Charlie and asked him to let me take over his seat so I could do Ted's pilotage and get us out of there by point to point navigation while he gave Ted as much first aid as he could. About that time we received two more bursts close by and I heard some flak whang into us. Then came a hissing sound, not unlike a blowout. Once again, I thought we'd had it; but it was only a portable oxygen bottle knocked out. Shortly after that we cleared the flak area which was a tremendous relief.

The #2 and #3 engines were still acting up so Jim let down slowly to 22,000 ft. where they picked up full power and started working fine again. Others weren't so lucky. About 5 minutes out of Berlin we spotted a B-17 below us, on fire. Saw about 8 chutes come out. One of them didn't open fully. Then, the plane went into a dive and I lost sight of it. Saw another plane coming out below with a feathered engine. Don't know whether he made it back or not. Altogether, three additional ships were lost out of the formation to flak over the target area.

Did pilotage navigation all the way to the Danish coast where we ran into a solid undercast. Mike Rheam took over getting fixes with his Mickey Radar set, and I went back to my desk to run the DR plot and try and pick up Gee fixes. Meantime, Ted was sitting comfortably in the corner and not showing any signs of pain.

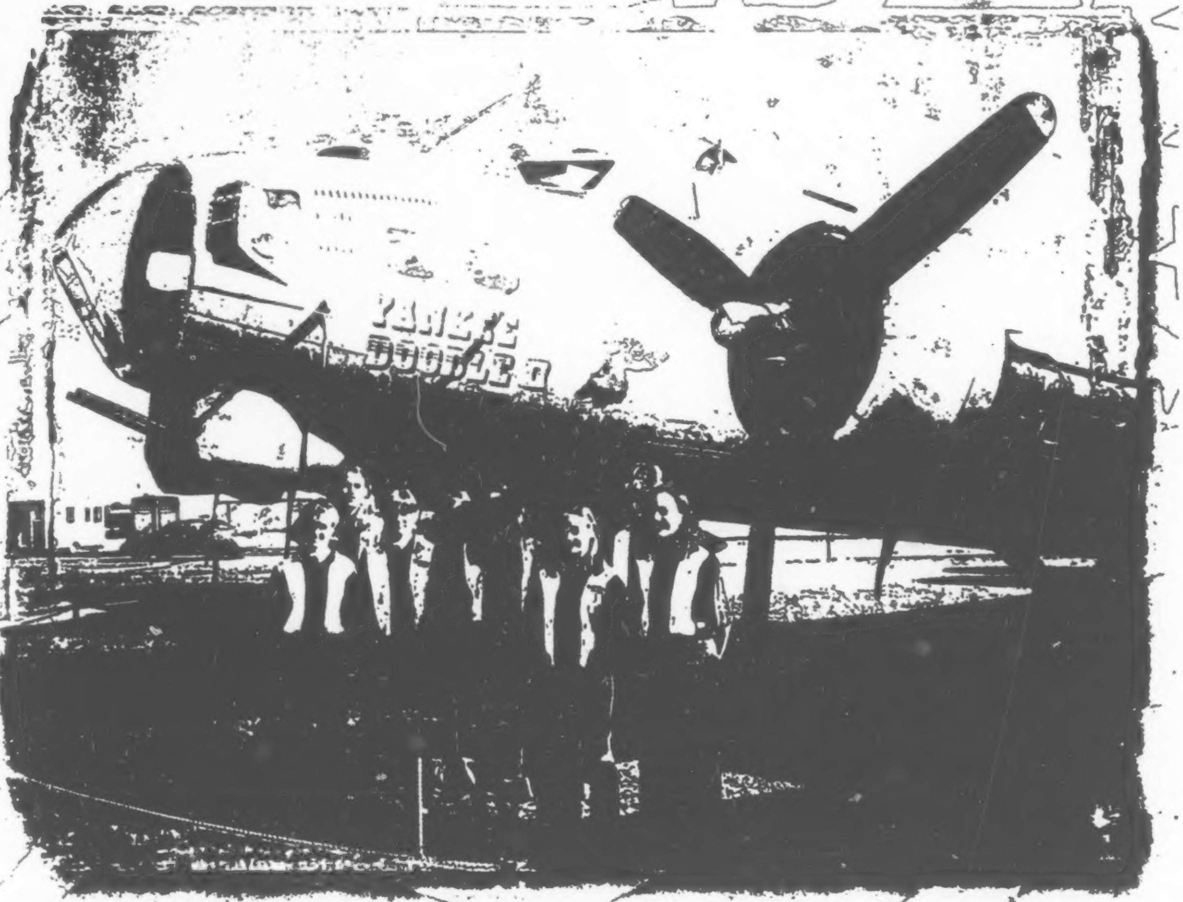
DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

Jim was flying on AFCE. Suddenly Mike called and said something about "broken control cables" in the radio room. I looked up and to my left, and saw cables on the rudder pedals were hanging loose. I realized they had been shot away, and my first reaction was, "What now?" However, I reached under the pilot's cockpit and found that the aileron cables were all taut. I knew we had directional control, and the AFCE was working, so why worry? As a matter of fact, I thought it was a big joke at the time.

I picked up Gee fixes at 7 deg east and came on in. We left the formation to our deputy lead at Cromer and all piled into the radio room in a regular ditching procedure while Jim and Major Halsey made a perfect landing. They used the still functioning Automatic Flight Control Equipment (AFCE) to bypass the useless rudder pedals and supplement the ailerons for lateral control.

General Gross was one of the first to come out to our plane. We parked it right in front of C hangar because Jim knew that was where the ship was headed for sorely needed repairs. It was a mess with 100 or more flak holes and 20 mm shell holes all over it. Ted wasn't hurt badly, but he did have to stay in the hospital for a few days since the Plexiglas irritated his eyes.

It was a helluva way to wrap up a tour of duty. However, it made no difference. We had successfully beaten the odds, and won our deadly game of tag. We were home free.



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